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AT HOME AND AT PLAY, THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS SUFFER PREVENTABLE EYE INJURIES

Prevent Blindness America Urges Everyone to Use Proper Eye Protection

CHICAGO (Aug. 19, 2005) – Sports are a part of every society, whether it be watching a favorite team on TV or playing a game in the backyard. But unfortunately, more than 40,000 people are treated for potentially blinding sports-related eye injuries every year, many of them children. However, the good news is that 90 percent of the injuries are preventable. Prevent Blindness America (PBA) has designated September as Sports and Home Eye Safety Month to raise awareness of how many of these accidents at home and at play can be avoided by taking a few, simple precautions.

"Some of our favorite pastimes can actually be quite dangerous when we don't take the necessary steps to protect ourselves," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of PBA. "It's so very important that both adults and children add eye protection to their routine."

Common types of eye injuries are corneal abrasions, blunt trauma, penetrating injuries and radiation injury from extended exposure to sunlight. According to the University of Illinois Eye Center, almost one third of sports-related eye injuries are to children between the ages of 5 and 14. In 2002, there were more U.S. emergency room visits due to eye injuries suffered while playing basketball than any other sport. Basketball was followed by water or pool activities, and baseball/softball.

PBA recommends goggles or face shields when playing sports. Proper lenses should be made of polycarbonate and bear an ASTM label, indicating they meet the standards of the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) for the specific sport. Every sport has an associated ASTM code, so make sure the product is labeled with the correct code before buying it.

It is equally important to protect your eyes around the house, when working with power tools or mowing the lawn. Industrial eye protection must meet strict safety standards designated by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), with specific codes for different industries and applications.

There are many things parents can do to protect themselves and their children from accidents in the home. Keeping detergents, cleaning supplies, nail polish remover, mouthwash and makeup out of the reach of children at all times can help to avoid eye

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injuries. Also, setting a good example by wearing eye protection while working on projects in the garage and keeping kids away from power tools, solvents, screwdrivers, glues, etc., are some of the many things adults can do to protect themselves and others.

In observance of Sports and Home Eye Health and Safety Month, PBA offers several **free** materials including *Tips for Buying Sports Eye Protection*, *Recommended Sports Eye Protectors*, and *Eye Safety Tips for Your Home* by calling 1-800-331-2020. A wide variety of information about sports and home eye safety is available on PBA's Web site at www.preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.

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