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For more information:
Prevent Blindness America
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035

**JANUARY'S NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH BEGINS
WITH NEW TOOLS TO PREVENT VISION LOSS**

***Prevent Blindness America Offers Free Online Assessment
and Information to Fight the Disease***

CHICAGO (Dec. 30, 2005) – Americans are living longer than ever before. On average, life expectancy in the U.S. is more than 76 years, compared to 49 years a century ago. Age-related eye diseases, such as glaucoma, pose a real threat to self-sufficiency and independence for seniors. And, as people age, maintaining quality of life can become a source of anxiety and concern.

In an effort to combat against this devastating, yet often preventable disease and to kick-off January as National Glaucoma Awareness Month, Prevent Blindness America offers a free Adult Vision Risk Assessment for individuals on its Web site at www.preventblindness.org. The site provides general information on glaucoma and resources on other age-related eye problems.

Typically associated with increased pressure in the eye, glaucoma can damage the optic nerve and, if left untreated, lead to permanent vision loss or even blindness. According to Prevent Blindness America's *Vision Problems in the U.S.* report, more than 2.2 million Americans age 40 and older have glaucoma. "At-risk Americans need to be aware that they can protect their vision and their quality of life by finding glaucoma early and treating it," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America.

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Glaucoma Risk Increases as Population Ages

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At first, glaucoma usually damages peripheral vision, and people with the condition may not notice the symptoms. Over time, however, central vision may also become impaired and, without treatment, lead to blindness. "We urge all people age 40 and older to find out if they are at risk for glaucoma and visit their eye doctor regularly," added Garrett.

To further its commitment to create public awareness for eye care health, Prevent Blindness America has also partnered with Allergan, Inc., in the creation of www.protectvision.org, an online resource for eye care professionals who treat patients with glaucoma. The Web site offers free downloadable fact sheets for patients and links to continuing education, as well as research summaries and other practice management resources.

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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