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Before School Starts this Year, Make Sure Every Child Takes the Test that May Help them Pass all the Rest

Parents Should Also Hit the Books to Educate themselves on the Importance of Children's Eye Health

CHICAGO (July 26, 2011) – For many, the first day of school is quickly approaching. And, parents know there is so much to be done before the first day of school to make sure that their child has all of the tools to succeed this school year. A key part of this success starts with healthy eyesight in the classroom.

A child's ability to see the blackboard and the words on a page clearly is critical to their learning experience. Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, has declared August as Children's Eye Health and Safety Awareness month in an effort to encourage parents to learn about ways they can help protect their child's vision.

Often children do not realize they have problems with their vision because they think how they see is how everyone else sees. They learn to compensate with their vision problems without fixing them, which can lead to more problems in school and later in life. Unfortunately, some students are misdiagnosed as having a learning disability or behavioral problems when they may simply have vision impairment. This confusion can be eliminated taking a child for a certified vision screening or an eye exam.

"Vision problems affect one in four school-aged children. We want all children to make sure their child's eye problems do not go unnoticed this school year," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "A child should not have to struggle in school because of an undetected vision problem."

Eye problems can range from common refractive errors such as nearsightedness and farsightedness, to serious eye conditions including:

Amblyopia or "lazy eye" - the most common cause of visual impairment in children. As the brain develops and receives diminished images from the affected eye, it begins to suppress those images and favor the unaffected eye. If this condition persists, the weaker eye may become useless. Amblyopia becomes more difficult to treat effectively as the child becomes older.

Strabismus or “crossed eyes” – a condition where eyes are misaligned, or do not line up with each other. This problem is caused when the muscles do not work together. Strabismus may eventually lead to amblyopia. Approximately one in 50 children has strabismus.

Parents should hit the books as well to learn more about how to keep their children’s eyes healthy. Prevent Blindness America has created “Star Pupils,” a free program specifically designed to educate parents on what they can do to ensure healthy eyesight for their kids. Parents may visit Starpupils.org and receive free information on everything from common eye conditions in children to tips on how to protect eyes from injury while playing sports.

For more information on children’s eye health and safety, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit starpupils.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, certified vision screening and training, 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, Prevent Blindness America is 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 preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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