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“SCHOOL’S OUT FOR SUMMER,” BUT DON’T LOSE FOCUS OF CHILDREN’S VISION AND EYE HEALTH

As the structure provided by school ends, Wisconsin parents can look to VISION USA for benevolent care

MADISON, WI – As Wisconsin’s primary and secondary students approach the end of the 2011 school year, the summertime can provide a welcome reprieve from the everyday rigors of academic instruction. However, the summer months also mean the loss of the daily services and support for children provided by school districts throughout our state. One of the most important of these services is the vision and eye health care of children, especially those from low-income families who do not have the means to such care for their children. The means to this care lies in parent awareness of programs such as [VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project](#), a benevolent (no cost) program provided by the [Wisconsin Optometric Association \(WOA\)](#) which offers comprehensive eye care services to children from uninsured, low-income families.

“Since 80 percent of a child’s early learning comes from vision, comprehensive eye exams are essential to a child’s academic, physical and social development,” states WOA Member and Children’s Vision Committee Chairperson Dr. Ann Wonderling, who practices optometry at the Family Vision Center in La Crosse and Tomah, WI. VISION USA offers comprehensive eye exams to children from uninsured, low-income working families. According to Dr. Wonderling, this program is organized to provide optometric care to those patients with a minimum of paperwork and intrusion into their financial situation.

Established in 1989, VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project has provided nearly twelve thousand comprehensive eye exams to Wisconsin children in its 22 year history. Participating WOA eye doctors agree to provide this care at no charge to the families. Whenever possible, VISION USA will work with local eye doctors, manufacturers, and service organizations, such as the Lions Club and Wisconsin Rotary, to provide prescription glasses if needed.

“Optometry is a compassionate profession,” said Dr. Wonderling. “We are intimately involved with the care of our patients and not all of them have the financial means to provide vision and eye health care to their children. That’s where VISION USA - The Wisconsin Project steps in and addresses this important need.”

Comprehensive eye exams performed by licensed eye doctors detect more than the vision screenings children may receive throughout their academic career. While screenings may assess distance vision challenges, they cannot evaluate the overall health of a child’s visual system, nor can they reduce the risk of future learning problems associated with undetected vision and eye health conditions.

To be eligible for the program, VISION USA patients must meet the following requirements:

- Children must be under 18 years of age and enrolled in school.
- They do not need to be U.S. citizens.
- Patients must have no eye health insurance or history of a vision exam within the last 12 months.
- Additionally, annual total family income must be below an established level according to house size, as **indicated by a tax return or verification from the child’s school that they qualify for free or reduced lunch**. WOA utilizes the 2011 Federal Poverty Guidelines calculated to 200% of poverty to verify that patients are eligible.

“I am proud to be a member of a professional association committed to a program that ensures all Wisconsin youth have the chance to see clearly,” declared Dr. Wonderling. “The cooperation between Wisconsin doctors of optometry, service organizations and companies within the ophthalmic industry is vital to the success of this program.”

For additional details on the VISION USA program and to access patient applications in both English and Spanish language versions, visit the [WOA website](#). If you have further questions about the program, call VISION USA at 1-877-435-2020, or contact WOA Children’s Vision via email at woacvi@tds.net.

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 631 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed and certified to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. The WOA also maintains an affiliation with the American Optometric Association (AOA). For more information, visit WOA’s website at <http://www.woa-eyes.org>.