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PROTECT YOUR INDEPENDENCE: LOW VISION DOES NOT HAVE TO DIMINISH QUALITY OF LIFE

The Wisconsin Optometric Association encourages those affected by low vision to be proactive

MADISON, WI – What does “low vision” really mean? According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), low vision is a visual impairment which interferes with the ability of millions of Americans to perform everyday tasks, despite some level of visual correction such as standard glasses, contact lenses, medications, or surgery. The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) and its members wish to bring attention to the difficulties low vision can place on quality of life for those affected and to educate those same individuals on ways to improve their day-to-day lives. The WOA encourages those affected by low vision to take charge in protecting their independence and quality of life.

The eighth annual American Eye-Q® survey conducted by the American Optometric Association (AOA) revealed that U.S. adults are concerned about the potential for vision loss as it relates to their quality of life. When asked about concerns over losing physical abilities, vision loss ranked a very close second behind only the loss of memory, but also ranked far above concerns regarding the loss of physical mobility and hearing. Adults who were concerned about developing serious vision problems most feared becoming unable to live independently. In light of this concern and when asked about aging parents, it’s important to note that these adults ranked loss of vision as the top health concern for their aging loved ones, even above Alzheimer’s Disease.

A majority of people develop low vision as a result of eye diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, or age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the latter which accounts for a significant amount of all low vision cases and, according to the AOA, is the leading cause of blindness in American adults over the age of 50. Visual impairment at any age can decrease an individual’s mobility and self-esteem. Although lost vision cannot usually be restored, it does not have to mean the loss of independence or a reduced quality of life.

According to Dr. Michael Tashner, 2014 WOA President and Platteville, WI optometrist, “Early diagnosis by an eye doctor is very important in treating low vision and preventing it from progressing, especially if you have glaucoma, cataracts, diabetes, or AMD.” WOA members encourage all adults, especially those who are noticing even slight changes in their vision, to visit their eye doctor each year as a preventative measure. “Being proactive about your eye health is an important step in preserving the future of your sight and your freedom,” asserts Dr. Tashner.

In addition to visiting your eye doctor on a routine basis, the WOA recommends everyone practice a healthy, smoke-free lifestyle including proper diet and exercise. Following these suggestions, along with taking the antioxidant vitamins C, E, A, and Zinc, may also help reduce your risk of vision loss.

“Low vision does not have to diminish a person’s quality of life,” affirms Dr. Tashner. There are many low vision aids, resources, and treatments available as well as continuous research that is being done. See your eye doctor for a comprehensive eye exam today and take the first step in protecting your independence. Visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members> for a list of licensed optometrists in your area.

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 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA’s website at www.woa-eyes.org.

About the American Eye-Q® survey:

The eighth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 15-18, 2013 using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population (margin of error at 95 percent confidence level).