

**“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** – While the summertime can provide a welcome reprieve from the everyday rigors of academic instruction, the summer months also mean the loss of the daily services and support for children provided by school districts throughout our state. One important service which is not dependent on the school’s schedule is the vision and eye health care of children, especially those from low-income families who do not have the means to such care. The means to this care lies in parent awareness of programs such as **VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project** (<http://www.woa-eyes.org/vision-usa-public>), 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 President and Wausau optometrist Dr. Jeff Sarazen. VISION USA offers comprehensive eye exams to children from uninsured, low-income working families. According to Dr. Sarazen, this program is designed 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 countless no-cost, comprehensive eye exams to Wisconsin children in its 23 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,” notes Dr. Sarazen. “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 can detect more than the vision screenings children may receive throughout their academic career. Although vision screenings are helpful, in order to reduce the risk of future learning challenges associated with undetected vision and eye health conditions, each child should be seen by a licensed eye doctor.

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.
- Patients must have no eye health insurance or history of a vision exam within the last 12 months.
- 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 showing that the child qualifies for free or reduced lunch. WOA utilizes the 2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines calculated to 200% of poverty to verify patient eligibility.
- Note: They do not need to be U.S. citizens.

“I am proud to be President of a professional association committed to a program that ensures all Wisconsin youth have the chance to see clearly,” declares Dr. Sarazen. “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 both English and Spanish language versions of patient applications, please visit the WOA Web site, [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org). 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](mailto: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 650 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 Web site at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*