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U.S. Lions Clubs Announce National Initiative to Screen Children's Vision

Oak Brook, IL, October 8, 2014 – Lions Clubs International President Joe Preston announced a new initiative called Lions KidSight USA designed to protect the vision of America's children.

KidSight USA will work with Lions around the country to help ensure that children between six months and six years of age receive vision screening and professional follow-up care when needed.

"KidSight USA is an important national initiative that will help families protect the eye health of their children," said International President Preston. "It builds on our proud history of saving sight and our belief that all children deserve to see the world clearly. With the help of Lions, we hope they will."

Lions in the U.S. currently screen more than 500,000 kids per year through state and local programs often known as "KidSight." Lions KidSight USA brings together established Lions vision-screening programs and supports the development of new programs in order to create a coordinated national effort that can help more children. Lions Clubs International expects the program to be fully operational in early 2015.

"Vision affects a child's ability to see the world, but it also impacts a child's ability to learn," said Dr. Ed Cordes, an optometrist and chairperson of Lions KidSight USA. "Experts say that up to 80 percent of learning is visual, so we need to screen all children to identify any vision issues that can get in the way of learning. And we need to screen children early to identify vision problems while they can still be corrected."

Most young children don't get their vision screened until they have problems learning or paying attention in school. By then, it may already be too late. Unless vision problems are detected early and corrected, they risk becoming permanent by age seven.

KidSight USA is supported by Lions Clubs International Foundation, which offers matching grants to Lions involved in vision screening. The foundation has awarded \$2.2 million in grants since 2000 to support children's vision-screening programs in the U.S. Two manufacturers of vision screening devices, Plusoptix and Welch Allyn, Inc., have also partnered with KidSight USA to provide financial support for the development of the program.

Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world. Its 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs are serving communities in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the globe. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired, championed youth initiatives and strengthened local communities through hands-on service and humanitarian projects. For more information about Lions Clubs International, visit lionsclubs.org.



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