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For more information:
Prevent Blindness Ohio
Andrea Albanese Denning
(800) 301-2020

MOST AMERICANS ARE UNAWARE OF THE DANGERS THAT UV RAYS CAN HAVE ON THE EYES

Prevent Blindness Ohio Launches Free Online Resource Dedicated to UV Education

Dayton (June 13, 2007) – Most people know the harmful effects that ultraviolet (UV) rays can have on the skin. But many are not aware of the damage that they can cause to the eyes. Possibly the most frightening aspect of UV damage is that it is cumulative, meaning the negative effects may not present themselves until years later.

In fact, a recent survey, sponsored by Transitions Optical, Inc., revealed that although 82 percent of respondents knew that extended exposure to the sun could cause skin cancer, only 9 percent knew it could damage vision. Additionally, only one in six respondents said they wear sunglasses when they prepare for extended exposure to the sun and only approximately one third said they wear a hat.

“Most of us wouldn’t dream of staying outside in the sun without putting on sunscreen lotion,” said Sherry Williams, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “But we also have to remember to wear both UV-blocking lenses and a brimmed hat to protect our eyes as well.”

In conjunction with UV Awareness information, Prevent Blindness Ohio launched a new, dedicated online resource for patients and their loved ones to learn more about what they can do to protect their eyes. The Web site, www.preventblindness.org/uv, offers a variety of tools and information on everything from risk factors to buying tips for sunglasses for adults and children. The site was made possible by a grant through the Transitions® Healthy Sight for Life Fund.

Extended UV exposure has been linked to eye damage including:

Cataract- a major cause of visual impairment and blindness worldwide. Cataracts are a cloudiness of the lens inside the eye that develops over a period of many years. Laboratory studies have implicated UV radiation as a cause of cataract. Furthermore, studies have shown that certain types of cataract are associated with a history of higher ocular exposure to UV and especially UV-B radiation.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)- a leading cause of vision loss in the United States for people age 55 and older. Exposure to UV and intense violet/blue visible radiation is damaging to retinal tissue and scientists have speculated that chronic UV or intense violet/blue light exposure may contribute to degenerative processes in the retina.

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Pterygium- a growth of tissue on the white of the eye that may extend onto the clear cornea where it can block vision. It can be removed surgically, but often recurs, and can cause cosmetic concerns and vision loss if untreated.

Photokeratitis- essentially, a reversible sunburn of the cornea resulting from excessive UV-B exposure. It can be extremely painful for 1-2 days and can result in temporary loss of vision. There is some indication that long-term exposure to UV-B can result in corneal and conjunctival degenerative changes.

Fortunately, eye protection doesn't have to be expensive to be effective. Quality sunglasses should block out 99-100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation and prices vary. For UV protection in everyday eyewear, there are several options like UV-blocking lens materials, coatings and photochromic lenses.

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and how to choose the best options for adults and children, please visit www.preventblindness.org/uv or call 1-800-301-2020.

About Prevent Blindness Ohio

Prevent Blindness Ohio is celebrating 50 years as Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. Founded in 1957 by U.S. Senator John Bricker and Lion's Club Member, Bob Morrison with support from Nationwide, the Ohio Department of Health and Delta Gamma Fraternity, PBO serves all 88 Ohio counties. We provide direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educate millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at www.pbOhio.org or call 800-301-2020.

About the Transitions Healthy Sight for Life Fund

Transitions Optical created the Transitions Healthy Sight for Life Fund to centralize and strengthen its corporate giving endeavors, unifying them with the mission to "help preserve healthy sight for life." To achieve this goal, funding and educational resources are provided to global, regional and local charitable organizations or efforts whose purpose is to help create awareness of the need for eye exams, eye protection and the enhancement of visual quality, and who are striving to help eliminate preventable blindness. For more information, visit www.HealthySightforLife.org.

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