

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For more information:**  
Prevent Blindness America  
Sarah Hecker  
(312) 363-6035  
[shecker@preventblindness.org](mailto:shecker@preventblindness.org)

## **Prevent Blindness America to Bring “Focus on Eye Health” to National Summit in Washington, DC**

**CHICAGO (Feb. 22, 2012)** – The leading causes of vision impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases. The number of Americans at risk for age-related eye diseases is increasing as the baby boomer generation ages. These sight-threatening conditions include age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. As if the health impact were not enough, blindness and vision impairment represent a significant financial burden to individuals and society.

Despite alarming rates of prevalence and cost, and the lack of understanding of eye disease and preventive behavior, the public resources for vision and eye health prevention, research, and care have also diminished. This past year alone, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) saw a drastic reduction in funding dedicated to national vision and eye health efforts with a drop from an already low \$3.2 million to an alarming \$511,000.

On June 20, 2012, Prevent Blindness America will host “Focus on Eye Health: A National Summit” at the Washington Marriott at Metro Center in Washington, D.C., to serve as a key launching pad for newly revised public health data on vision and eye health. The event will provide updates of two very significant public health reports from PBA – “Vision Problems in the U.S.” and the “Economic Impact of Vision Problems” as well as a variety of public health presentations that will address vision and eye health in the United States.

Scheduled presentation topics include:

- Vision Problems in the U.S: Prevalence of Vision Problems - Dr. David Friedman, Johns Hopkins University
- Economic Impact of Vision Problems - Dr. Kevin Frick, Johns Hopkins University
- National Plan for Eye and Vision Research - Dr. Rick Fisher, National Eye Institute
- Surveillance of Vision Problems - Dr. Paul Lee, University of Michigan
- Co-Morbidities and Vision - Dr. John Crews, Vision Health Initiative, CDC
- Diabetes and the Eye - Dr. Ann Albright, Division of Diabetes Translation, CDC

Current gold-level sponsors include Allergan Foundation, American Academy of Ophthalmology, Transitions Optical, The Vision Council and VSP; while silver-level

sponsors include Alliance for Eye and Vision Research, AMD Alliance International, American Foundation for the Blind, American Optometric Association, Foundation for Eye Health Awareness, Helen Keller International, Lions Club International, Research to Prevent Blindness, ThromboGenics, Vision 2020 USA and VisionServe Alliance. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

“By bringing together leaders and key stakeholders in the fight against adult eye disease, we hope the Summit will provide them with the data they need to educate the public, as well as government representatives, on how we can work collaboratively today to save the vision of millions of Americans in the future,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America.

In conjunction with the Focus on Eye Health summit, PBA will also be holding its annual Eyes on Capitol Hill event which brings those directly impacted by vision loss and blindness together with their government representatives. A reception for the Congressional Vision Caucus (CVC) will be held the evening of the Summit. The CVC is a bicameral and bipartisan coalition of more than 100 Congressional Members dedicated to strengthening and stimulating a national dialogue and policy on vision-related problems and disabilities.

For more information about the Prevent Blindness America Focus on Eye Health: A National Summit or how to become a sponsor, please visit [www.preventblindness.org/eyesummit](http://www.preventblindness.org/eyesummit) or call (800) 331-2020.

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

###