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**Prevent Blindness America Urges the Public to Educate Themselves
on the Dangers of Fireworks**

- Effects of Injuries from Fireworks Can Last a Lifetime -

CHICAGO (June 26, 2013) – Prevent Blindness America warns the public about the potential danger of fireworks. Injuries from fireworks can have a severe impact, even affecting lives years after the accident.

Back in 1997 when Colin Burns of Chicago was in the 5th grade, his life changed when shrapnel and gunpowder from a firework that someone else lit, destroyed his left eye. To make matters even worse, Burns was already being treated for amblyopia, or lazy eye. The accident caused him to replace his “good eye” with a prosthetic eye and he then needed to rely on his weaker eye to compensate. Burns endured multiple surgeries over the next few years, including one where doctors moved tissue from his bottom lip to his eye socket to help fill up space. Because the risk of injury to his right eye was too great, he was not able to play in organized sports growing up.

Despite his injury, Burns accomplished tremendous amounts, including recently graduating law school. However, the lingering effects of his eye injury have made many activities, including driving and reading, more difficult.

“Of course as a child, I didn’t fully realize how important healthy eyes were until my accident,” said Burns. “I hope my story will serve as a reminder to everyone, especially parents, on how dangerous fireworks can be.”

Last year, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) stated in its [annual report](#) that there were an estimated 8,700 injuries treated in emergency rooms in the United States, with the majority of those around the Fourth of July holiday.

Of those injuries, 12 percent, or 600, were to the eyes. And in most cases, including Colin’s, bystanders are more often injured by fireworks than the operators themselves. In fact, last year there were 100 eye injuries reported from viewing public fireworks displays.

Prevent Blindness America has these tips to help prevent fireworks-related injuries:

- Do not purchase, use or store fireworks of any type.
- Be aware that even sparklers are dangerous and cause one half of fireworks injuries in children ages 14 and younger.
- Protect yourself, your family and your friends by avoiding fireworks.
- Attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators but be aware that injuries can still occur.

Prevent Blindness America continues to support the development and enforcement of bans on the importation, sale and use of all fireworks and sparklers, except for authorized public displays by competent licensed operators. The non-profit group believes such bans are the only effective means of eliminating the social and economic impact of fireworks-related trauma and damage.

“We want to wish everyone a safe and happy Fourth of July,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “And we encourage everyone to celebrate this important holiday without the use of fireworks.”

For more information on fireworks safety, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or log on to preventblindness.org/prevent-eye-injuries-fireworks.

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 and regional offices, 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 or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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