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National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness Names Shavette L. Turner, Prevent Blindness Georgia, as Recipient of the 7th Annual Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award

-National Award to be Presented to Ms. Shavette L. Turner, in Recognition of her Dedication and Exceptional Service to Bring Vision Services to Disadvantaged and Underserved Children -

CHICAGO (Aug. 18, 2021) – [The National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness \(NCCVEH\)](#) has announced the recipient of the seventh annual “Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award” as Ms. Shavette L. Turner, Vice President, Children’s Vision Services at Prevent Blindness Georgia (PBGA), in recognition of her leadership and expansion of the “Children’s Vision Services of Prevent Blindness Georgia” program. The award will be formally presented at the NCCVEH Annual Meeting, to be held virtually, on Friday, Sept. 10, 2021.

The highest honor that the NCCVEH bestows, the Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award recognizes significant efforts by an individual or group of individuals to improve public health approaches for children’s vision and eye health at the state or national level. The award was established in 2014 by the Advisory Committee of the National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness to commemorate Bonnie Strickland and her groundbreaking work to establish a comprehensive system for children’s vision in the U.S. She served as Director of the Division of Services for Children with Special Health Needs, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, before her retirement in 2014.

Ms. Turner has been named as the 2021 Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award recipient for her unique approach to helping disadvantaged and underserved youth across Georgia access vision and eye care, with emphasis in Hall County where there is a significantly large Latinx population who experience barriers to eye care. She observed the significantly high rate of children who did not pass a certified vision screening (23 percent) in Hall County, compared with the state average of 8 – 10 percent. She also observed that many children were not receiving the follow-up care they needed when she returned for screening the next year and some children’s vision had deteriorated.

“Shavette Turner began to advocate for us to put even more efforts to ‘complete the circle of care’ of children—to not be content to vision screen and refer, but to work even harder to help provide access to follow-up eye exams for the children who do not pass vision screenings and to provide eyeglasses for those who needed them,” said Jill Thornton, President and CEO of PBGA.

Turner employed a variety of methods to break through the many barriers to eyecare – coordinating the assistance of more than 200 volunteers. She leveraged resources from Prevent Blindness, as well as the local eye care community, Univision, United Healthcare and National Vision, Inc. to provide services for a vulnerable group of immigrant children who were not receiving needed eye care services.

Turner and her team of volunteers provided vision screenings to every elementary school child in the county school system – 9,005 children in 20 elementary schools from kindergarten through 5th grades. For the 1,665 who did not pass the vision screening, all were invited for free comprehensive eye exams and were eligible to receive free prescription eyeglasses, if needed. Eye examinations were provided during Saturday clinics thanks to the donation of time and talent from pediatric ophthalmologists and optometrists and Spanish-language translators. Additionally, Turner secured in-kind donations of equipment, eye drops, and fabrication of prescription eyeglasses. As a result, 93 children were identified as having Amblyopia and almost 300 students are starting the school year in brand new glasses thanks to Turner’s efforts.

“The children of Hall County hold a special place in my heart. I know that every school day, these children face language barriers and sit for special placement testing as a result. Not being vision ready to learn was something I knew we could do something about,” said Turner. “Our vision provider partners came through for us in a major way, and we’re grateful.”

Past recipients of the Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award include Logan Newman, founder of the [East High School Vision Care Program](#); Anne L. Coleman, MD, MPH, [UCLA Stein Eye Institute](#); the Vision in Preschoolers (VIP) Study Group; Richard Bunner, retired from the Ohio Department of Health; Sean P. Donahue, MD, PhD, Professor of [Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Vanderbilt University](#); the [Illinois Eye Institute \(IEI\) at Princeton Vision Clinic](#); and the [Pediatric Physicians’ Organization at Children’s](#) (PPOC).

Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness, added, “The work that Shavette Turner has done, and continues to do, to provide children with the bright and healthy future they deserve through access to quality eyecare, is truly inspiring. We look forward to working with her and her team to learn her best practices so we can expand those to children’s vision programs across the country.”

For more information on the 2021 Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award, Prevent Blindness or the NCCVEH, please visit nationalcenter.preventblindness.org or contact Donna Fishman at (800) 331-2020 or dfishman@preventblindness.org.

About the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness 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 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. In 2009, Prevent Blindness established the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health, with funding and leadership support from the HRSA- Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Serving as a major resource for the establishment of a public health infrastructure, the National Center advances and promotes children's vision and eye care, providing leadership and training to public entities throughout the United States. The National Center is advised by a committee of national experts and leaders from the fields of ophthalmology, optometry, pediatrics, nursing, family advocates and public health to guide the work and recommendations of the Center. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at <http://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org> or www.facebook.com/preventblindness.

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