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## **Eye Thrive Named Recipient of the 11th Annual Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children's Vision Award from the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness**

**CHICAGO (Sept. 29, 2025)** – The [National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness \(NCCVEH\)](#) has announced the recipient of the eleventh annual [Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children's Vision Award](#) as "[Eye Thrive](#)," specifically for its "Wraparound Vision Services" program. The award will be formally presented on October 29, 2025, 7-8 p.m. ET, as a [virtual presentation event](#).

Accepting the award on behalf of Eye Thrive will be Kate McKearn, M.A., Chief Executive Officer, and Brandon Hinkle, Senior External Optics Coordinator. Both will be providing detailed presentations of Eye Thrive's work and its positive impact on children's vision.

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 NCCVEH to commemorate Bonnie Strickland's groundbreaking work in establishing a comprehensive system for children's vision in the United States. She served as Director of the Division of Services for Children with Special Health Needs Maternal and Child Health Bureau, before her retirement.

Eye Thrive's mission is to give children, specifically low-income kids throughout the St. Louis, Mo. metropolitan region, the ability to thrive through access to essential vision care. It accomplishes this by providing the following vision services:

1. Free on-site vision screenings performed by NCCVEH-certified staff.
2. Access to services through Eye Thrive's two [Mobile Vision Clinics](#), fully equipped optometry centers providing comprehensive eye exams and prescription glasses made on-site and dispensed the same day to children. Duplicate pairs are provided for children with high prescriptions or developmental needs.
3. A medical referral program that provides referrals to quality Medicaid-qualified and/or low-cost specialists for children in need of additional follow-up care.
4. An eyeglass replacement program that provides free, no-questions-asked replacement glasses delivered to the child's home or school.

5. An Electronic Medical Records system to track patient care and medical information from year to year, allowing for continuity of care.

Eye Thrive has built partnerships with over 100 high-need schools and community centers throughout the St. Louis metro region. Before the launch of their second Mobile Vision Clinic in June 2025, Eye Thrive served 17,747 children in low-income communities during the 2024-2025 school year, providing free screenings, nearly 4,800 comprehensive eye exams, just under 6,000 pairs of prescription glasses, and 168 medical referrals.

“We are honored to receive the Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award in recognition of our work throughout the greater St. Louis region. At Eye Thrive, our team is dedicated to meeting our kids where they are at their schools, summer camps, and community centers, and providing them with free comprehensive eye exams and glasses made on-site,” said Ms. McKearn. “We believe that eyesight is a human right, and that early intervention vision care is critical to protecting it for our children, empowering them to thrive in the classroom and beyond.”

Past recipients of the Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award include [Alcon Children’s Vision Center](#); Danielle Crull, ABOM, author and business owner of A Child’s Eyes, organizer of The Pumpkin Patch Project, and founder of the [Truffles the Kitty Organization](#); and Donny W. Suh, MD, FAAP, MBA, FACS, Chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, and Professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science, at [Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, University of California, Irvine](#). A full listing of past recipients may be found [here](#).

“Healthy vision puts children on the path to success in the classroom and beyond,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Congratulations to Eye Thrive on being named the recipient of the 2025 Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award. We enthusiastically acknowledge them for their inspiring work providing kids in their communities with the important access to eye care that they deserve.”

Added Donna Fishman, director of the NCCVEH, “The Eye Thrive model is a shining example of a comprehensive public health approach to children’s eye health, and one we are so pleased to highlight with this honor.”

For more information on the 2025 Bonnie Strickland Champion for Children’s Vision Award, or the award ceremony presentation, please visit <https://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/bonnie-strickland-champion-for-childrens-vision-award>, or contact Donna Fishman, director of the NCCVEH, at [dfishman@preventblindness.org](mailto: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 at Prevent Blindness (NCCVEH), with support from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Serving as a national resource for the establishment of a public health infrastructure, the NCCVEH advances and promotes children's vision and eye health, providing leadership and training to public entities throughout the United States. The NCCVEH 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 NCCVEH. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving mission, call (800) 331-2020 or visit us at [NationalCenter.PreventBlindness.org](http://NationalCenter.PreventBlindness.org).

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