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GIVING THE GIFT OF SIGHT

“We See You” Celebrates Local Organizations Providing Vision Support for Children

Vision screening is an essential part of ensuring academic success and overall well-being of children. While often overlooked, vision plays a crucial role in a child’s ability to read, learn, and thrive in school, which is why Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) is proud to recognize and celebrate its collaboration with several organizations to provide free vision screenings for students.

We See You: Partnerships for Eye Health

Thanks to the Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program, a subsidiary of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, the CCPS “We See You” partnerships not only detect potential vision problems, but they may also provide children with necessary exams, glasses, and more—giving students the gift of sight and helping them succeed in the classroom. Partial funding for Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program comes from the Collier Community Foundation and Florida Department of Health. (More information about our other vision partners and their services may be found on pages 2 and 3 of this release.)

Providing students with the proper tools to see clearly means they can engage in their lessons more effectively, participate fully in class activities, and approach their education with confidence. According to the American Optometric Association, 1 in 4 children have a vision problem, and many of these issues can be corrected with early intervention. By providing comprehensive eye exams to students who fail their school-mandated vision screenings, the Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute not only ensure students get the support they need to excel academically, but they also refer students for medical follow up to address underlying medical conditions.

MEDIA AVAILABILITY

- **WHAT:** Vision Screenings for Students
- **WHEN:** Thursday, December 12, 2024, 9:30 am
- **WHERE:** We will start at 9:30 am at North Naples Middle School (16165 Learning Lane, Naples) and travel to Naples Park Elementary School (685 111th Avenue N, Naples) with an approximate arrival time of 11:30 am.

We invite media to join us at the above schools to witness, firsthand, the importance of these vision screenings and the positive impact they can have on our students. During these screenings, reporters will have the opportunity to speak with district staff, vision specialists from both the Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, and elementary and middle school students about the process and its life-changing effects. Please RSVP to communications@collierschools.com should you plan to attend.

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“WE SEE YOU” VISION PARTNERS

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

Free vision screenings for grades K, 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12 in schools receiving federal funding for low-income students. They also provide free vision exams and glasses, if needed, to all students who fail the vision screening. Additionally, they include follow-up checks for all students that received glasses the previous year to ensure the prescription is still current. They will provide tertiary care including long-term vision care and surgery, if needed, for students identified during the vision exam.

Florida Department of Health - Collier County

Free vision screenings for grades K, 1, 3, and 6 in schools that do *not* receive federal funding for low-income students. They notify parents of the vision results and send home referrals for any failed vision screening.

Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program

Comprehensive eye exams and prescription glasses at no cost to students in selected grades in schools that do *not* receive federal funding for low-income students. As a subsidiary of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, they also support students with advanced vision conditions to help them get the vision care they need.

Florida Lions Eye Clinic

Vision exams and services for CCPS students who are referred through the school screenings. They serve as a valuable resource for families needing vision care.

Healthcare Network of SWFL

Free vision screenings for pre-K students enrolled in Head Start. They notify parents of the vision results and send home referrals for any failed vision screening.

Naples Lions Club

Provides CCPS students with vision vouchers for eye exams when parents have no eye insurance.

About the Collier Community Foundation:

Collier Community Foundation® is a tax-exempt, public, charitable organization established in 1985 to increase and focus on local private philanthropy. Today, the Collier Community Foundation manages over 850 funds, works with hundreds of nonprofits, and has granted over \$362 million to nonprofit organizations, community programs, and scholarships. Informed giving. Powerful results®. Learn more at colliercf.org or call 239-649-5000.

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MEDIA AVAILABILITY AT SCHOOLS WILL HIGHLIGHT SUPPORT BY BASCOM PALMER EYE INSTITUTE AND MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE

A History of Collaboration

As early as 1943, University of Miami Trustee Dr. Bascom Palmer and Miami Lighthouse discussed the establishment of an eye clinic to serve the local community. In 1947, Palmer was elected board president of Miami Lighthouse and announced that “he would do everything possible” to start “a clinic to treat the blind and persons with eye ailments which might lead to blindness.” In 1948, Miami Lighthouse purchased land on N.W. 17th Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues, across the street from Jackson Memorial Hospital. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Palmer announced plans for an institute costing \$500,000 (about \$6.5 million in 2024 dollars) to be built on the site. Dr. Palmer made it his life's work to raise funds and support for the eye hospital in cooperation with Miami Lighthouse. In 1960, the Miami Lighthouse contributed \$305,000 (about \$3.3 million in 2024 dollars) to construct an eye institute named in honor of Dr. Bascom Palmer. The current institute, opened in 1973, was built on the 17th Street site originally purchased by Miami Lighthouse, under Palmer's leadership, in 1948. A strong collaboration between Miami Lighthouse and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute continues to this day, as both institutions transform lives through vision-related services and research.

About Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

The Bascom Palmer Eye Institute pushes the frontiers of research, patient care, and education to improve and restore the gift of sight. Bascom Palmer Eye Institute serves as the Department of Ophthalmology for the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Miami, Florida. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life by improving sight, preventing blindness, and advancing ophthalmic knowledge through compassionate patient care and innovative research. Bascom Palmer is the No. 1 eye institute in the nation, as ranked by the U.S. News & World Report for 23 years. This national standard underscores its dedication to eradicating eye diseases around the world. Every day, its physician-scientists focus on treating eye disease with the latest technology and conduct research to find solutions for incurable eye diseases.

About the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

The mission of the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program is to make sure that all financially disadvantaged school children who fail the State-mandated vision screening have access to a comprehensive eye examination including dilation and prescription glasses, if required, to give them the best chance at academic success. The Heiken Children's Vision Fund was created in 1992 by the Dade County Optometric Association and merged with Miami Lighthouse in 2007. In 2010, the Statewide Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, LLC, a division of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc., was registered with the State of Florida, expanding vision health services to low-income children statewide. For more information, visit www.floridaheiken.org.