



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EyeCare America Recognizes October's World Blindness Awareness Month

SAN FRANCISCO-October 7, 2011 - Every five seconds one person in the world goes blind, but in 80 percent of the cases, blindness is preventable or treatable. EyeCare America is dedicated to preserving sight by urging people to “get out of the dark” and get eye disease caught early through a simple painless eye exam in honor of World Blindness Awareness Month taking place in October. This national program offers eye exams at no out-of-pocket cost through volunteer ophthalmologists dedicated to serving their community.

“More than 45 million people worldwide are blind,” said Richard P. Mills, MD. “EyeCare America is raising awareness of the importance of regular eye exams, because in many cases, the most severe eye diseases offer no warning signs, until it’s too late and vision loss is irreversible. But regular eye exams can help you catch problems early, while there is still time to treat conditions and prevent permanent loss of sight.”

In honor of **World Blindness Awareness Month**, EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, provides year round eye exams at no out-of-pocket cost to people age 65 and over. Eye exams are provided by a corps of nearly 7,000 EyeCare America volunteer ophthalmologists across the U.S. and Puerto Rico. **Those interested in the program can visit www.eyecareamerica.org to see if they are eligible.** The organization’s online referral center also enables friends and family members to find out instantly if their loved ones are eligible to be matched with an EyeCare America volunteer ophthalmologist.

While some eye diseases, such as cataracts, progress slowly and offer symptoms, potentially serious eye problems, such as glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and diabetic retinopathy, often offer no warning signs. They can only be caught and treated in the early stages, when preventive care is still possible, through a medical eye exam.. By the time these conditions do begin to show symptoms, such as blurred vision or black spots across the field of vision, often vision loss is irreversible.

EyeCare America is designed for people who:

- Are U.S. citizens or legal residents
- Are age 65 and older

- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Do not belong to an HMO or receive eye care benefits through the VA.

To see immediately if you, a loved one or a friend, 65 or older, is eligible to receive a referral for an eye exam and care, visit www.eyecareamerica.org.

EyeCare America is co-sponsored by the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc., with additional support provided by Alcon. The program is endorsed by state and subspecialty ophthalmological societies.

About EyeCare America

Established in 1985, EyeCare America, the public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is committed to the preservation of sight, accomplishing its mission through public service and education. EyeCare America provides eye care services to medically underserved seniors and those at increased risk for eye disease through its corps of nearly 7,000 volunteer ophthalmologists dedicated to serving their communities. More than 90 percent of the care made available is provided at no out-of-pocket cost to the patients. Since its inception, EyeCare America has helped more than 1.5 million people. EyeCare America is a non-profit program whose success is made possible through charitable contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations. More information can be found at: www.eyecareamerica.org

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NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: High-resolution images and interviews with EyeCare America spokespeople, physicians and patients available upon request.