

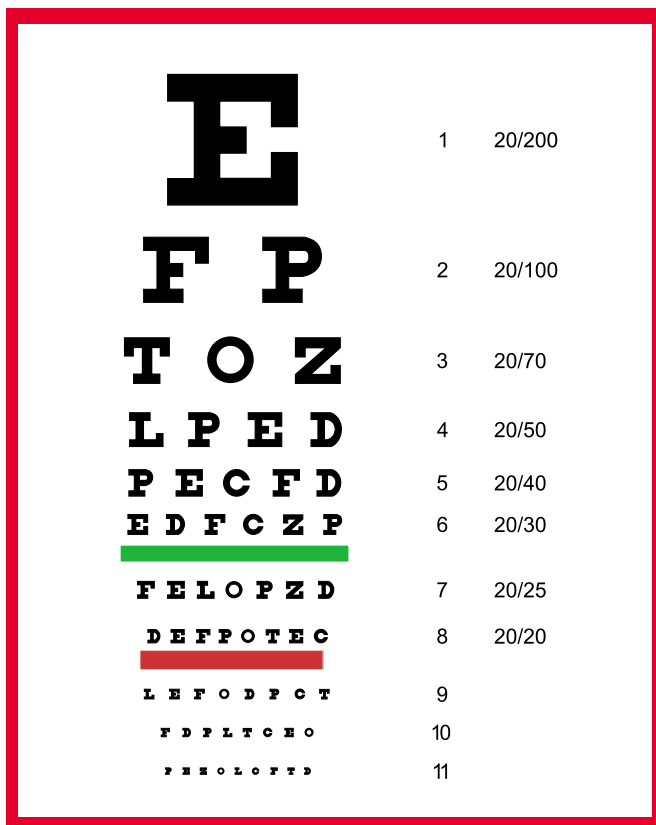
## Lois' Vision4Kids Gives Needy Children the Gift of a Lifetime

October 2, 2023



Dear Friends:

I'm sure that at various times in our lives we've all seen this:



It is, of course, the standard eye chart that we see when at the optometrist or ophthalmologist, and it determines whether our vision is 20/20 or if we need glasses.

Now, try to imagine a five-year-old in kindergarten who can't read past the first two lines of this chart, which means they certainly will not be able to view what's on the blackboard at the front of their classroom. And because so much of what is presented to children is visual, vision and learning are very closely related. Simply put, a child needs clear vision to learn to read and needs to keep their vision clear in order to continue learning in the classroom.

Yet, more than 25% of all children between the ages of 2 and 17 must wear glasses or contact lenses. The numbers are much higher among children of color: Nearly 40% of Hispanic children, 34% of Asian children, and more than 20% of Black children suffer from nearsightedness or astigmatism, a defect in the eyes that causes distorted vision. And according to the National Institutes of Health, those children from the most economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to suffer from undetected vision problems and reduced vision-motor integration skills.

I know quite a bit about vision impairment. My mother suffered terribly for years from macular degeneration. I saw firsthand how vision impairment affected her physical and emotional well-being. Can you imagine what it does to a child? They may feel isolated, they may be bullied, and they may feel “stupid” because they can’t see and read. In fact, the American Optometric Association has conducted studies finding that when vision problems go undetected, children almost invariably have trouble reading and doing their schoolwork. They often display fatigue, fidgeting, and frustration in the classroom. These traits can lead to a misdiagnosis of other problems. Moreover, it is estimated that 80% of children with a learning disability have an undiagnosed vision problem.

No child should have any barrier to learning. That’s why I conceived and have provided the start-up funding for Lois’ Vision4Kids -- a new initiative in partnership with our friends at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and the Palm Beach County Food Bank. Launching officially on Saturday, Oct. 28 at the food bank, Lois’Vision4Kids will provide free eye screenings for children 18 years and younger from the county schools and youth organizations. Based on their vision screening results, EVERY child who qualifies for prescription eyeglasses will receive not just one but two free pairs of prescription glasses.



And, as the late game show host, Bob Barker, would say on “The Price is Right” -- But wait, there’s more!” All children who complete a vision screening will receive a pair of free sports goggles. I invite you to join me in this initiative so we can not only ensure its success but also expand the program beyond Palm Beach County. After all, vision impairment does not discriminate. It impacts all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, genders, and socio-economic groups, with children being the most vulnerable. No appointment or pre-registration required. Walk-ins are welcome.

In the meantime, I leave you with this thought: When we wake up each morning, we each get to open two extraordinary gifts--our eyes! Let’s all use them and focus on what we can do to give those gifts to others: our children, our future.

With love always,

*Lois*

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