



**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

## **National Non-profit, EyeCare America, Celebrates 25 Years of Saving Sight**

March XX, 2010 – San Francisco, CA – EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is proud to announce that it turns 25 this year. Founded in 1985 by a group of dedicated ophthalmologists committed to preserving sight, the organization has grown to include nearly 7,000 volunteer ophthalmologists across the country who provide eye exams and up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost to qualified patients. Since the program's inception, EyeCare America has helped more than 1 million people by raising awareness for eye disease, distributing valuable, free sight-saving information and providing access to medical eye care to the medically underserved communities. EyeCare America is the largest program of its kind in American medicine.

The award-winning program has been recognized by every sitting U.S. president since 1985 and has received the support of a bevy of celebrities including Bob Hope, Gene Kelly, Bill Cosby, Senator John Glenn, Oscar de la Hoya and most recently by TV legend Betty White.

In honor of its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, EyeCare America would like to encourage people to call 1-800-222-EYES (3927) to find out if they qualify for an eye exam at no cost. EyeCare America is a year-round program. Its helpline operates all day, every day, year-round. Since 1985 in {list state here} EyeCare America has helped more than {\_\_\_\_} people and currently has {XXX#} volunteer ophthalmologists. (statistics available online)

The program facilitates eye care for U.S. citizens or legal residents who are without an ophthalmologist and who do not belong to an HMO or do not have eye care coverage through the Veterans Administration. To be found eligible for the program an individual should fall into one of the two categories below.

- **Those who are age 65 or older and who have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years may be eligible to receive a comprehensive, medical eye exam and up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost for any disease diagnosed during the initial exam.** Volunteer ophthalmologists will waive co-payments, accepting Medicare and /or other insurance reimbursement as payment in full. Patients without insurance receive this care at no charge.
- **Those who are determined to be at increased risk for glaucoma (by age, race and family history) and have not had an eye exam in 12 months or more may be eligible to receive a free glaucoma eye exam if they are uninsured.** Those with insurance will

be billed for the exam and are responsible for any co-payments. The initiation of treatment is provided, if deemed necessary by the doctor during the exam.

EyeCare America is a non-profit program whose success is made possible through our nationwide network of volunteer ophthalmologists who donate their services and through charitable contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations. EyeCare America ophthalmologists volunteer their time and care to patients without payment from the organization. More information can be found at: [www.eyecareamerica.org](http://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.**