



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 10, 2014

LOCAL CHILDREN WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT TO RECEIVE LIFE-CHANGING HIGH-TECH VISION AIDS

Shreveport, LA – On Thursday, July 17th, local children who are visually impaired will receive life-changing vision assistive technology thanks to grants from the Carolyn W. and Charles T. Beard Family Foundation, The Community Foundation of North Louisiana, and The Grayson Foundation. The children were referred to Sight Savers America's 'I Can See Now' program by local schools and Louisiana Association for the Blind. All of the children receiving equipment have eye conditions causing severe vision loss. The July 17th event is a cornerstone of Louisiana Association for the Blind's Children's Program.

Low vision is a medical term defined as "chronic disabling visual impairments that cannot be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, or medical or surgical treatment." Although visual field, contrast and other factors play a role, an individual can usually be considered to be legally blind if s/he has a visual acuity of 20/200 or worse.

The collaborative team includes Sight Savers America, a nationally expanding non-profit organization that provides free vision care for qualifying children; Louisiana Association for the Blind, the only vision rehabilitation center in northwest Louisiana; and Optelec U.S. Inc, a world leader in innovative and life-changing assistive technologies for the visually impaired. Although each participating child has low vision, the Optelec MultiView electronic video magnifier (EVM), BrailleNote, and other assistive devices they receive will allow them to make the most of their remaining vision. These vision aids are costly and are not covered by insurance. The vision aids and follow up training and support are made possible by grants from The Carolyn W. and Charles T. Beard Family Foundation, The Community Foundation of North Louisiana, and Grayson Foundation, all of Shreveport, LA.

The EVM allows children to magnify objects such as: books, magazines, coloring pages, maps, and toys up to seventy-nine times the original size. The BrailleNote has a braille keyboard and speech synthesizer. These vision aids will allow each child to read faster, work on schoolwork, complete personal grooming, and so much more with less eye fatigue and back and neck strain.

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Staff from Sight Savers America and Louisiana Association for the Blind will deliver the technology to the children and will train each child and their family on the use of their new vision assistive equipment that day at Louisiana Association for the Blind's Claiborne Avenue campus. Sight Savers America will provide extensive follow-up care and keep records of the child's progress with their vision equipment until the child reaches the age of nineteen. In addition, Louisiana Association for the Blind will provide follow-up training and support to help ensure the children receive optimum benefit from the technology. All services are provided free of charge to the family.

"The strength is in the collaboration of local and national programs with similar missions that allow all of us to fulfill our shared goal of helping children achieve the best vision services possible," said Sight Savers America President and CEO Jeff Haddox. "For these kids, having the MultiView Electronic Video Magnifiers and/or other vision assistive devices in their homes will level the playing field. They will maximize the use of their remaining vision and be able to succeed in school and achieve their independence."

Louisiana Association for the Blind President and CEO Shelly Taylor adds, "By banding together, organizations can accomplish much more than acting alone. We are pleased to collaborate with Sight Savers America, Optelec U.S., and community partners, The Carolyn W. and Charles T. Beaird Family Foundation, The Community Foundation of North Louisiana, and Grayson Foundation. Creating endless opportunities for independence for children with low vision in our community – that's the bottom line."

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WHO: Louisiana Association for the Blind
Sight Savers America
Optelec U.S., Inc.
The Carolyn W. and Charles T. Beaird Family Foundation
The Community Foundation of North Louisiana
The Grayson Foundation

WHAT: Visually impaired children receive life-changing assistive technology and training to enhance their vision at the home of the child. Interview and photography opportunities will be provided for media.

WHEN: Thursday, July 17, 2014, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

WHERE: Louisiana Association for the Blind
1750 Claiborne Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71103

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