

EYESON DESIGN PROCEEDS PROVIDE EDUCATION, RESEARCH & ASSISTANCE TO VISUALLY IMPAIRED

GROSSE POINTE SHORES, Mich., June 5, 2000 — For more than a decade, the annual EyesOn Design automotive exhibition has helped fund numerous research and support programs for the visually impaired through the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology (DIO).

In fact, more than 60 percent of the DIO's annual operating budget comes from the EyesOn Design fundraiser, held each Father's Day weekend, said Dr. Phillip Hessburg, DIO President and founder.

"Every year, we use the proceeds from the show to help hundreds of visually impaired or blind people become more independent," Hessburg said. "In addition, thousands more will benefit from evaluations performed by the allied health professionals employed in physicians' offices across the United States that were trained by our Institute," he added.

Friends of Vision

Friends of Vision (FOV), a group of 100 volunteers who assist the DIO's permanent staff with various education and service programs, also raise funds that directly support the DIO.

The FOV hosts support groups for the visually impaired, which help reassure members that they are able to cope, they are not alone, and they can remain independent. They serve as a source of encouragement and hope to those living with vision loss or blindness.

Funds also maintain the Gorey Resource Center shop, a 1,400 square-foot space at the DIO headquarters in Grosse Pointe Park. The shop offers a wide selection of items at reasonable prices, all designed to help visually impaired and blind people lead active, productive lives. Items include large print and Braille books, talking watches, clocks and calculators, hand-held and stand magnifiers, closed-circuit magnifying machines, and much more.

Ophthalmic Education

The DIO operates the only accredited two-year Ophthalmic Technology and Ophthalmic Assistant programs in Michigan. This program is one of just 13 accredited programs in the United States. It prepares technicians and technologists to perform a wide variety of procedures under the direction of an ophthalmologist. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs accredits the DIO's program. Currently, there are more than 5,000 nationally certified ophthalmic technicians and technologists in the U.S.

Many of Michigan's 400 ophthalmologists are affiliated with the DIO. Some of the institutional affiliates include Bon Secours Cottage Health Services, Henry Ford Community College, Marygrove College, and Henry Ford Health Systems Eye Care Services of Detroit, Fairlane, and Grosse Pointe.

Research

EyesOn Design also helps fund the DIO's research efforts. The DIO has been studying the relationship between vision and the safe operation of motorized vehicles, as well as restoring lost vision through electrical stimulation and microchip technology. Eventually, it hopes to help facilitate initiatives to give sight to the blind by pioneering a procedure in which a photosensitive chip is surgically implanted onto, or perhaps under, the retina.

Since some 50 laboratories around the world are at work on similar projects, the DIO will sponsor **The Eye and The Chip, An International Colloquium on Artificial Vision** in conjunction with the EyesOn Design. The purpose of the colloquium is to bring together ophthalmology experts from across the globe to share information about replacing vision loss from macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa and other diseases.

The DIO invites those involved in the field of ophthalmology to attend the academic seminar, as well as biomedical and electrical engineers, computer science experts, neurobiologists, physicists, medical and scientific journalists and others who have an interest in using advanced technology to help restore sight to the visually impaired.

The event takes place June 16 and 17 at LDM Technologies in Auburn Hills, Mich. To learn more about the colloquium or to register, call 313-824-4710, or email ckezlarian@mycomcast.com.

A second research project, called **The Eye and The Auto**, addresses the relationship between visual matters and the safe operation of motor vehicles. Researchers around the world are studying various visual requirements in each state, rating highway road signs for visibility, and much more.

The DIO program and fund administration is led by a volunteer Board of Directors headed by DIO founder and president Phillip C. Hessburg, MD, and current chairman of the board, James N. Candler

For more information on DIO programs, services and volunteer opportunities, call 313-824-4710.