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PROMOTING EYE HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE TODAY CAN SAVE BUSINESSES MONEY IN THE LONG RUN

New Vision Wellness Program from Prevent Blindness America Offers Employers Chance to Save Sight for Their Employees

CHICAGO (Feb. 25, 2009) – As health insurance costs continue to rise, employers are looking at ways to cut costs without cutting quality or access to care for their employees. Promoting eye health in particular, is crucial to ensuring that employers keep their health care costs down. The more vision ailments that employees have, the more medical care they utilize, which generates increased health-related expenditures for the employer.

Prevention is one of the best ways to keep healthcare expenses down. Fortunately, half of all blindness is preventable through early detection and treatment by an eye care professional.

Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, has declared March as Workplace Vision Wellness Month in an effort to educate corporations and their employees on the importance of vision health, including warning signs of potential eye disease and safety tips on how to avoid vision-threatening eye accidents. Prevent Blindness America has recently launched its **Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program** designed to help companies provide the tools employees need to protect their eye health.

With more than 100 organizations already participating, the program offers educational and promotional materials that help to deliver critical vision wellness information in the workplace. The materials were developed by leading eye care professionals including ophthalmologists, optometrists and research professionals designed to encourage employees to make vision care a health priority and help to avoid needless pain and suffering from preventable eye diseases.

“Healthy vision is something that is so vital to our quality of life, yet we tend to take it for granted that it will always be there for us,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “This program will allow companies to provide useful and timely information about eye wellness and eye safety to their most important resource, their employees. And, one of the best parts about the Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program is it’s free to participate!”

Employers may benefit from the Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program by the potential for increases in worker productivity, the reduction of vision-related disability claims and health benefit costs and a reduction of absenteeism, sick leave and premature retirement due to vision-related illness or work related eye injuries.

By joining the Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program, participants will receive:

- Vision Wellness in the Workplace Promotion Guide
- Prevent Blindness America's Healthy Vision Observance Calendar
- Monthly e-mailed vision health and safety posters, fact sheets and eye health and safety news updates
- The Common Eye Myths poster
- Adult Vision Risk Assessment for employees
- Sample Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Guide

In addition to the Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program, Prevent Blindness America also encourages companies to enroll in its **Wise Owl Eye Safety Recognition Program**. Since 1948, this program has provided safety education materials to employers to help their employees avoid eye accidents as well as offers recognition to companies and individuals who have saved vision through dedication to proper eye protection in the workplace. In fact, 90 percent of all eye injuries are preventable by wearing the proper protective eyewear.

To find out how your company can sign up for the Healthy Eyes Vision Wellness Program, the Wise Owl Eye Safety Recognition Program, or to receive free information on eye safety in the workplace, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or by visiting preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org.

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