



Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate Celebrates A Proud History of Sight Saving

A Past to Honor... A Future to Mold

In 1908, Dr. Park Lewis, a noted ophthalmologist from Buffalo, New York and Edith Holt, daughter of the New York publisher, decided to take action to fight preventable blindness in the United States. Through the help of volunteers, they established the first volunteer-driven eye health and safety organization, the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. Ohio volunteers, Dr. William Synder (Ophthalmologist-Toledo), Robert Irwin (American Association of Workers for the Blind-Cleveland), Jacob Shawan (Columbus Public Schools), and E.M. DePeltquestagny (American Nurses Association-Massillon) joined notables such as William H. Taft, Theodore Roosevelt and Helen Keller in composing the first nationwide board of Directors of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. This organization also had the distinction of being the second national health organization formed, after the American Red Cross.

Through the hard work and dedication of this early group of volunteers, the National Society successfully led legislation that virtually eliminated ophthalmia neonatorum, then a leading cause of blindness in infants. The organization later created the first volunteer-run preschool vision screening program in the United States.

In the 1940's, the National Society (now known as Prevent Blindness America) began expanding vision screening training in different areas of the country and at the same time enlisted the support of Delta Gamma Fraternity. As part of this period of expansion, the Ohio Affiliate of Prevent Blindness (PBO) was founded in 1957.

On April 11, 1958, Mrs. Ruby Hopkins and Mr. E.W. Maynard from the National Society, came to Columbus Ohio to meet with the volunteer leaders who had founded Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate in 1957 – U.S. Senator John Bricker and Upper Arlington Attorney and Lions Club Member, Robert Morrison. At meeting at the Hotel Fort Hayes in the Sapphire Room, Judge Henry Robison was elected State Chairman of PBO. Miss Roberta Abernethy, a staff member of the Delta Gamma National Office volunteered her services as administrative secretary.

Other members of the first Board of Directors included Lois Booker, Columbus Public Health Nursing Service, Della Loviner, State Department of Education, Mary O'Brien, Columbus Association for the Blind, Alma Sutherly, Columbus Hospital Federation, E.C. Baum, Lions Clubs of Ohio, George Davis, Ohio Department of Health, Paul McDaniel, Nationwide Insurance, W.J. Treece, Franklin County Society for Crippled Children and Dr. Morris Battles, Ophthalmologist.

PBO's first year fund raising efforts yielded \$8000, 40% of which was shared with the National Society. All funding came from workplace federal employee donations from the Combined Federal Campaign. In our 50th year, the PBO budget has grown to over \$2 million with 5 offices and a staff of 20+.

Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate's top staff leadership over the past 60 years includes Bernice (Dolly) Lund, Edith Harter, Kay Stoffel, Jane Spencer Patrick, Virginia Benton, and Sherry Williams.

Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate has also had the benefit of outstanding volunteer leadership with the following individuals serving as Board of Directors Chairs since our founding:

1958: Judge Henry Robison 1962: Robert Morrison
1964: Dorothy Wildasin
1966: Dan Scarberry
1968: Judge Vincent M. Shields 1970: Charles Leftwich
1972: Ralph Kunze
1974: Edmond Coughlin
1976: Jim Liggett
1978: J.A. Turner
1979: Fritz Ziegler
1981: Mike Canter
1984: Vic Woods
1985: Martha Bullock
1988: Kent Stuckey
1990: Press Southworth
1992: Malcolm Murray
1994: Bob Saik
1996: Steve Grassbaugh
1999: Justice Evelyn Stratton
2001: Rick Bunner
2003: Bob Weisman
2004: Larry Leguire
2005: Kathy McGinnis
2007: Russ Kennedy
2009: Jenny Camper
2012: Bill Byers
2013: Betty Montgomery
2015: Mike D'Ippolito
2017: Sherry Lewis
2019: Carolyn King

At the conclusion of our 63rd year at the end of 2021, PBO will have held 129 People of Vision Award Events (including 9 done virtually due to the Corona Virus Pandemic of 2020-21) and honored corporate and community leaders of the state for their visionary leadership in enhancing the quality of life in their communities. People of Vision Award Events are held in Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Toledo.

Honorees have included Nationwide, Huntington National Bank, Worthington Industries, The Columbus Dispatch, American Electric Power, The Kroger Company, Bank One, Columbia Gas, Consolidated Stores, Honda, The Columbus Blue Jackets, Grange Insurance, Pizzuti Companies, Battelle, Mount Carmel, Ross Products Division of Abbott, OhioHealth, CareWorks, Chemical Abstract Service, Crane Group, AEP Transmissions, Corna Kokosing Construction Group, The Ohio State University Department of Athletics, The Columbus Clippers, McDonald & Company, The Geon Company, Oglebay Norton, Hawk Corporation, Greater Cleveland Growth Association, Oatey Company, SBC Ohio, The Plain Dealer, Medical Mutual, Forest City Enterprises, Cleveland Clinic, Roetzel and Andress, Invacare, Buckley King, KeyBank, Cuyahoga Community College, BDO,

Illuminating Company, The Andersons, Mercy Health Partners, Brooks Insurance, Block Communications, ProMedica Health System, Hylant Group, University of Toledo, Mercy Health, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, Western Southern Life Insurance, Fifth Third Bank, Cincinnati Financial Corporation, Cintas, Castellini Co., PNC, Cox Financial Services, Catholic Healthcare Partners, TriHealth, University of Cincinnati, Ohio National Financials Services, Deaconess Health Association Fund, Luxottica Retail, Anthem, Miller-Valentine Group, Sinclair Community College, Premier Health, University of Dayton, CareSource, Children's Medical Center of Dayton, Wright State University, Kettering Health Network, Dayton Power and Light and Boonshoft Museum of Discovery US Bank, Levin Family Foundation, Good Samaritan Hospital, Discover Classical, AK Steel, Kuhlman Corporation, The Columbus Clippers, State Auto, White Castle, Frost Hall Brown LLC, Xavier University, Kingston Healthcare Company, Citizen Bank, Electronic Management Systems, SmartBusiness, Safelite Autoglass, SJS Investment Services, LaRosa's Family Pizzeria, Oswald Companies, White Castle Systems and Kettering Hospital. Individuals honored include Archie Griffin, Mayor of Cleveland, Bishop Pilla, Governor George Voinovich, Governor Bob Taft, U.S. Senator Mike DeWine, Auditor of State Betty Montgomery and Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton.

Since Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate's founding in 1957, much has been accomplished to serve the mission – to prevent blindness and preserve sight. Our vision is to “help Ohioans enjoy good sight for life.” With the population aging and living longer, there will be new challenges on the horizon in regard to the growth of vision loss, if nothing is done to curb it. The mission of PBO remains relevant today as it did over 100 years ago.

Landmarks and Highlights In History

Some landmarks and highlights in our history since our founding include:

1908: Volunteers create Prevent Blindness America when they learn that 30% of blindness in children could be prevented.

1917: Efforts lead to federal legislation that virtually eliminates the leading cause of blindness in newborns (ophthalmia neonatorum). Eye drops at birth are now standard procedure.

1926: Nationwide preschool vision screening program begins.

1930: First eye safety program for industry.

1948: The first Ohio Wise Owl Club charter at Herring-Hall-Marvin Safe Company in Hamilton.

1957: Senator John Bricker asks friends statewide to help create an Ohio affiliate of Prevent Blindness America.

1958: First annual meeting of the Ohio affiliate. Funding base is provided by donations from the Combined Federal Campaign – federal employee workplace giving program.

1959: First Ohio Glaucoma Screening is conducted with the Lions Club.

1961: PBO constitution adopted.

1962: Dr. William Havener becomes PBO's first fund-raising chair. PBO gets its first office space at 1998 Cambridge Boulevard, Upper Arlington, OH.

1963: PBO advocates for \$200,000 state budget appropriation for vision research and requirement for safety windshields on automobiles. Jack Nicklaus serves as PBO Sight Saving Chair; Walt Disney serves as PBA Sight Saving Chair.

1963: Ohio becomes first state to pass School Eye Safety Law, sponsored by PBO Board Member, Representative Clara Weisenborn (Dayton), now adopted by most states.

1964: Incorporation papers for PBO are filed on September 16th by Bob Morrison, Dolly Lund and Dan Scarberry. PBO Direct Mail program is initiated.

1965: PBO officially becomes an “affiliate” of PBA, versus status as a Chapter.

1967: PBA vision research grants given to Dr. Kean at Case Western Reserve University and Dr. Keates at OSU.

1972: First 100% board giving resolution passed by the PBO Board.

1977: Glaucoma Alert Program launched. PBO becomes a self-supporting affiliate earning its total budget locally. Bob Evans and Archie Griffin serve as Sight Saving Chairs.

1978: First community-based fund-raisers initiated – Flip for Sight Tumble-A-Thons

1979: Barbara Nicklaus serves as Sight Saving Chair. PBO’s first special event, Bucks for Buck- Eyes, is held at the home of Pat and Nancy Ross raising \$10,000 net.

1980: PBO’s first phonathon.

1981: “Eye Care for Children” teaching curriculum introduced statewide. **1983:** PBO advocates for vision test requirement for motor vehicle operators.

1984: PBO opens glaucoma screening clinic.

1986: PBO develops its first Strategic Plan.

1989: Southwest Ohio Chapter formed. A staffed office opens in 1994.

1990: Vision Care Outreach Program initiated to provide access to comprehensive eye care to homeless and medically indigent Ohioans.

1993: Northeast Ohio Chapter formed. A staffed office opens in 1995.

1997: Ohio Eye Care Coalition defeats fireworks bill.

1998: The Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate website opens: www.pbohio.org .

1999: Save Our Sight Initiative (HB 756), led by PBO with 20 partners, is implemented as a \$1 Ohio motor vehicle registration check-off. Funds raised are invested in expansion of vision care services for children.

2000: Dayton office opens as satellite division of Southwest Ohio Chapter. *Wise About Eyes*, an interactive children’s eye health and safety exhibit developed by PBO premieres to 37,000 visitors at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery, Dayton.

2002: Northwest Ohio Chapter Office opens in Toledo.

2003: Aging Eye Public Private Partnership formed by a proclamation from Ohio Governor Bob Taft and supported by the Ohio Department of Aging.

2005: Ohio Legislative Task Force to Preserve Adult Vision formed with leadership from PBO, makes recommendations about curbing doubling of vision loss among Ohio seniors.

2006: PBO creates the *Young Investigator Student Fellowship Awards for Female Scholarship in Vision Research* to encourage young scientists to enter the field. Six inaugural grants were awarded.

2007: PBO celebrates its 50th Anniversary of “Helping Ohioans Enjoy Good Sight for Life!”

2008: Prevent Blindness America celebrates its 100th Anniversary!

2009: Prevent Blindness America is awarded a grant from the CDC to undertake key vision preservation and vision loss prevention initiatives.

2010: Prevent Blindness America is named National Coordinating Center for universal screening for young children. PBO is selected as one of five pilot sites to help establish this program.

2011: Eye CAN advocacy program launched to widen access to eye care for all Americans.

2012: Children served by PBO with support from the Save Our Sight Fund tops 5 million since the program began.

2013: PBO unveils “Vision Problems in Ohio” website

2014: PBO leads Ohio Fireworks Safety Coalition in defeating sight threatening legislation.

2015: PBO chosen as pilot site for CDC adult vision program.

2016: Dayton Area Office becomes Miami Valley Ohio Chapter

2017: PBO creates AR_Eye – app that replicates virtual reality vision problems

2019: PBO serves highest number of people ever – 1.4 million Ohioans

2020: PBO responds to the coronavirus pandemic continuing all program services virtually.