



Youngstown Community School



Liberty Local Schools

## **MEDIA ADVISORY** **STUDENTS RECEIVE GIFT OF SIGHT**

December 4, 2018

(Youngstown, OH) - 454 students in the Youngstown and Liberty School Districts will be receiving the Gift of Sight this holiday season. During the week of December 10th, eleven schools will be hosting a team of 13 eye doctors while they provide eye exams and 2 pairs of glasses for each child in need.

This city-wide program is possible due to an incredible level of collaboration among various community organizations, eye doctors, foundations and businesses. Three years ago, Classic Optical, Essilor Vision Foundation, Sight for All United, and the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley partnered to provide vision services to 100 children in the Youngstown City School District and Youngstown Community School. This number increased to 283 children last year and 454 children this year.

"We're grateful for the partnerships we have with the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, Sight for All United, Doctors for Sight, Ageless Eye Care, Essilor Vision Foundation, and Classic Optical and many others that allow us to serve our students by providing vision screenings, eye exams and even eyeglasses for the students who need them," said CEO Krish Mohip of the Youngstown City School District. "It allows our district to provide a much-needed wrap-around service for our students and families."

"Our students and families at the Youngstown Community School are so fortunate to be a part of Success After 6, which brings in such important collaborations like this vision program." said Rachael Smith, Director of Youngstown Community School, "We want to thank all the groups involved who make this possible. There are so many caring organizations and individuals who want our children to succeed. We truly appreciate all the planning and hard work that goes into making this work."

The partnership expanded for the 2018-2019 school year with Akron Children's Hospital joining the collaboration to provide vital nursing oversight. An additional school district, Liberty Schools, was also added.

"We are so thankful to the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, Liberty Alumna Dawn Friedkin and the entire Classic Optical family, Sight for All United, Doctors for Sight, Essilor Vision Foundation, Ageless Eye Care and all of the volunteers and doctors who make this event possible for our students. It is so important that we do everything we can to assist young people when it comes to learning. We know deficits are created when kids are unable to see and hear properly. We look forward to this collaboration as it will allow us to build upon the program we have in our district that ensure the needs of all of our students are being met," said Liberty Schools Superintendent Joseph Nohra.

In September, United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley led 200 volunteers who conducted vision screenings for 2,500 students kindergarten through 4th grade in the three school districts. This partnership is part of United Way's Success After 6 initiative, which provides essential wrap around services to students and families in the schools, including an afterschool program that focuses on academics and enrichment opportunities.

"Our United Way knows that change does not happen alone. We are so grateful for this collaboration, which has been able to grow since we first started it in 2016," said Bob Hannon, President of the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley. "Our goal with Success After 6 is to break down the barriers to learning that many of these children experience. This is one amazing example of the community impact work we are able to do in the school systems with our partners."

Children who did not pass the screenings conducted by volunteers will receive a full eye exam the week of December 10th. The doctors volunteering this year include: Dr. Guy Barrett, Dr. Beckie Brown, Dr. John Conrad, Dr. Nick Lawrence, Dr. Pete Sforza, Dr. Chris Shoemaker, Dr. Mike Woloschak, Dr. Ryan Maceyko and Dr. Sergul Erzurum.

Sight for All United, a new 501c3 organization created locally to help our community receive vision services, provided guidance for implementation of the school vision program, recruited the eye doctors from their membership of Doctors for Sight, and distributed and fitted the glasses at the school for the children.

"Sight for All United is proud to collaborate with such a great team of people. When we formed Sight for All United only 2 years ago, we knew there was a vision need in the community that was not being met. However, even we did not anticipate the number of children we could help reach their visual and academic potential." Dr. Sergul Erzurum, Co-Founder and President of Sight for All United, Pediatric Ophthalmologist and Professor of Surgery, Northeast Ohio Medical University.

Essilor Vision Foundation is providing the lenses for children to receive 2 pairs of glasses, one for school and one for home. Classic Optical will provide the frames and manufacture all of the glasses. The distribution and fitting of the glasses will occur in the schools after the holidays through volunteer opticians' efforts.

“Classic Optical has a history of giving back to the community, and we are especially passionate about increasing access to vision correction for children. I'm extremely proud to be a part of innovative partnerships like this one that provides eyeglasses at no cost to children in schools, especially in our neighborhood, and even more especially in the school I attended.” Dawn Friedkin, President of Classic Optical Laboratories, Inc.

“Vision is the most overlooked factor impacting a child’s success in school and in life. Essilor Vision Foundation is proud to partner with eye doctors, schools and non-profits in Youngstown and around the country to give children a brighter future by helping them see the world clearly. With a clear vision, there truly are no limits to what a child can achieve.” Becky Palm, President, Essilor Vision Foundation.

Students who received glasses during the 2017-2018 school year saw great results. A data analysis shows those YCSD students who were given eyeglasses through the collaboration logged an attendance rate higher than the average student. Their discipline rate was also 41 percent lower than the average student.

More students who were given eyeglasses also met the Third-Grade Reading Guarantee, 65 percent compared to 57 percent for average students. Those given eyeglasses also scored 17 percent higher on the AIR English Language Arts test and 6 percent higher on the AIR math test. On the NWEA reading test, students prescribed glasses through the vision program performed 13 percent better than the student average and they 25 percent better than the student average on the NWEA math test.