

Taos Lions Purchase iScreen Camera by Lions Bill Wau and Newell Boughton

Taos Lions Club members donated \$8000 during the Club's December 6 meeting to purchase the iScreen digital camera equipment which will be used for free eye screening of Taos County children. Lions Club members will use the iScreen camera to quickly photograph children's eyes. Eye professionals analyze the photos to identify major pediatric vision problems. Once a child is identified with a problem, school officials will alert their parents that he/she will need a full eye exam to determine the appropriate treatment. If the family cannot afford the eye exam and subsequent treatment, the Lions will find a way to make it happen.

The Lion's Club donations, which they are calling a "Christmas Present to Taos Families," follows several free screenings organized by the Taos Lions Club this year. First, Dr. Jane Compton provided children free eye screening and exams in the New Mexico Lions Eye Van at the 15 September 2007 Holy Cross Hospital Health Fair. Next, 113 Taos County Head Start students were screened with iScreen equipment borrowed from the Ruidoso Noon Lions on 12 October 2007. Finally, 250 Enos Garcia K-2 students, as well as dozens of pre-school students, were screened on 29-30 November 2007.

As Taos Lions' President Bill Waugh states, "Taos Lions Club members realized that we needed our own iScreen equipment so we can provide this essential service year-round to the children of northern New Mexico. We put out the call and the Lions responded, donating the full \$8,000 purchase price in less than



Taos Lions conducting an eye screening of K-2 children at the Enos Garcia Elementary School in Taos on 29-30 November.

20 minutes. Their outstanding generosity brought a tear to my eye."

The NM Lions Operation KidSight screening service is being provided by Lions in southern New Mexico and other states. The Taos Lions thank the Ruidoso Noon Lions Club for the use of their equipment and training. The initial Taos Lions eye screening effort, which was quite successful, was made possible through the collaboration with the Holy Cross Hospital Foundation, Taos County Head Start, Enos Garcia Elementary School Principal and staff, the Taos School Board, and the NM Lions Eye Foundation's Operation KidSight Program.



Community vision

OPERATION KIDSIGHT FOCUSES ON TAOS YOUTH



Megan Bowers

Rich Sanders of the Lions Club holds Richie Tafoya steady for his eye scan Friday (Oct. 12) as part of Operation Kidsight.

Lions Club teams with Memphis company to test kids' sight

By Chandra Johnson
The Taos News

Doctors in Memphis, Tenn. thought 7-year-old Tyler Thomas had attention deficit disorder and prescribed Adderall to help him focus in school. But the only prescription he really needed was for his extreme farsightedness.

Using a new digital vision screening technology called iScreen, optometrists and school health providers are being offered an alternative to Snellen letter charts and distance testing to screen for vision problems.

"Once he started wearing glasses, his attention problem became bet-

ter," Tyler's mother, Dee Thomas, wrote in a letter to iScreen in 1999. "If the iScreen system had not picked up this problem, there is no telling how long my son would have been on this drug and stigmatized for having ADD."

On Friday (Oct. 12) the benefits of the new technology came to Taos thanks to the Lions Club. Coined "Operation Kidsight," the Lions Club project is geared toward cutting-edge vision testing for every child in New Mexico, especially ages 3 to 6.

To that end, the Lincoln County Lions Club purchased an iScreen system and shared the investment with Taos children at the recent

Holy Cross Hospital Health Fair.

In the iScreen system, a child looks into a box where a digital camera bounces light off the back of the eye and a picture is taken. Once the pictures are sent back to iScreen, they are sent for processing to the University of Vanderbilt.

President of iScreen Jack Bellows said the new system is far superior to conventional vision screening tools like a Snellen chart.

"Based on the color and shapes we see from the photograph, experts can determine eight or nine different vision problems," Bellows said in a phone interview. "And we

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VISION

Children's eyesight

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can test children who can't read a Snellen chart or speak English."

Taos optometrist Jane Compton was also on hand to see the new system and help with exams.

"Our brains are more devoted to vision than any other sense," Compton said. "Screenings aren't a substitute for a full exam, but they

help identify the kids with the most critical need."

Lincoln County Lions Club member Bryson McCool said the project has been in the works for some time, but it was only recently the club was able to strike a deal with the iScreen company for the equipment and three years of free processing.

McCool said it's important for children to be screened even before they start school and it may be too late.

"Child's eyes are fully developed by age six," McCool said. "If we can get in there and find a problem, just about every one of them can be corrected."



A busload of little ones arrives from the Vadito Headstart program.

Megan Bowers

Seeing the problem

The need for early vision problem detection is much greater than many parents may know.

"Sixty percent of children in this country have not been examined by an optometrist by age 6 when the eye has already developed," Bellows said. "There's an assumption that if something is wrong and they can't see, the child will tell them."

Bellows said often parents depend too much on the child's reaction.

"The numbers are staggering," Bellows said. "At least once a month we get kids in here who get correction and say that they didn't know there were leaves on trees. They thought they were just green."

According to statistics from a study by the American Optometric Association, it's a problem that may be more widespread than the public knows.

Study results from 2002 revealed that one in 10 children runs the risk of developing an undetected or undi-

agnosed vision problem. One in 30 children will develop amblyopia, or "lazy eye," one of the most common vision problems.

The study also tested the success rates of children that received infant eye examinations. More than 1,000 children between 12 and 30 months old were split into two groups. The group that did not receive vision screening were 17 times more likely to be diagnosed with lazy eye than the children who were screened.

The solution to many problems, Compton said, is to have children screened for vision problems in the first 12 months of life. Compton said the problems that begin with a child's vision could have huge consequences if left untreated.

"You can go on and on about vision and the social implications," Compton said. "If you're not reading up to grade level by age 10, the chance of being functionally literate are slim to none. Seventy to 80 percent of the prison popu-

lation reads below an eighth grade reading level."

Current testing

As the health coordinator for Taos Schools, part of María Chávez-Medina's job is to make sure every child is screened for vision and hearing.

"If they can't read, they can't learn," she said. "It's important to remember that the Snellen chart is just a screening tool. It has a lot of merit because that is what the state recommends and it is what we can afford."

Debra Wright is a school nurse at Enos García Elementary School. She commonly refers children for full-vision exams based on standard testing.

"I make maybe 150 referrals a year and about two-thirds of that get glasses," Wright said. "Just because we get them to the doctor doesn't mean they get the benefits of it."

Wright said that for children as young as kindergarten, distance testing is performed with pictures. "If they start missing what the pictures are then we know we need to double check," Wright said.

LIONS CLUB TEST KIDS' SIGHT AT TAOS PUEBLO DAY SCHOOL

By Chandra Johnson
The Taos News

Kids' sight was the main focus at the Taos Pueblo Day School Friday (March 14), as young and old lined up to have their sight tested through the Lions Club's "Operation KidSight" campaign.

KidSight is a project is geared toward cutting-edge vision testing for every child in New Mexico, especially ages 3 to 6. But under special circumstances, anyone can be tested. KidSight committee chairman Alan Thiese said Tuesday (March 18).

"We tested about 144 kids of all ages," Thiese said. "Usually our focus is preschool to second grade, but we accommodated them. We tested a few teachers, too."

Since the Lions Club purchased its own iScreen system this year, the project has tried to visit every school in Taos County in an effort to ensure every child has access to adequate eye care.

In the iScreen system, a child looks into a box where a digital camera bounces light off the back of the eye and a picture is taken. Once the pictures are sent back to iScreen, they are sent for processing.

According to statistics from a study by the American Optometric Association, poor eyesight in children is a problem that may be more widespread than the public knows.

Study results from 2002 revealed that one in 10 children runs the risk of developing an undetected or undiagnosed vision problem. One in 30 children will develop amblyopia,



Grace Luhan has her eyes checked with the help of Lions Club member Peter Adange.

Megan Avina

or "lazy eye," one of the most common vision problems of childhood.

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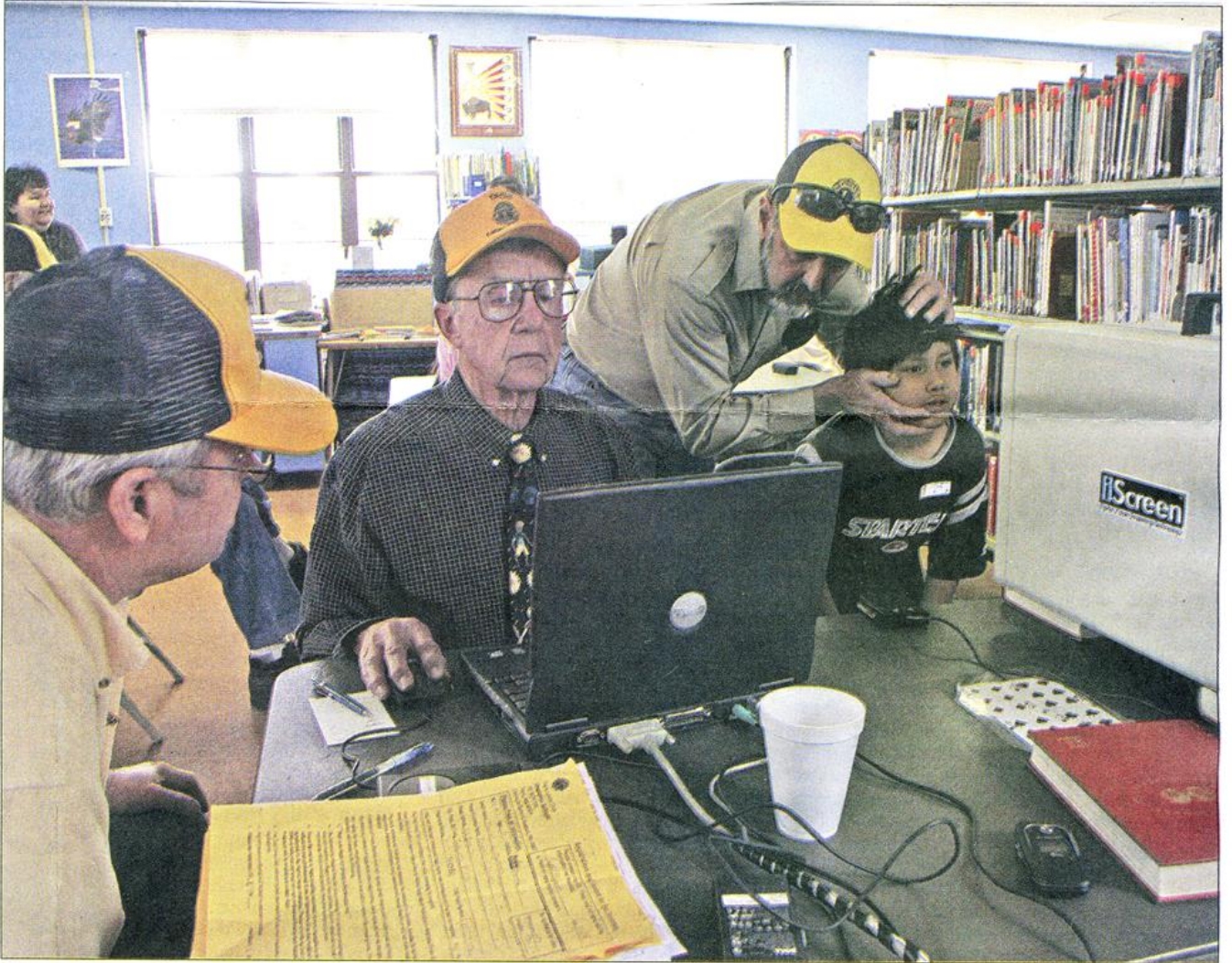
who were screened.

For an easily corrected problem, the cost of treatment for lazy eye has quite a price tag. A therapy cost portion of the study reported that the United States spends \$7.4 billion per year on treatment for lazy eye in children.

Thiese said the Lions Club was more than likely bound for testing in Peñasco schools next.



The Lions Club has Operation Kidsight down to a science as they move hundreds of youngsters through the exam with ease and efficiency.



Lions Club members bring Operation Kidsight to Taos Pueblo Day School. From left are: Alan Thiese, Harry Mayhew, Peter Adange and Joseph Mirabal.