

One Sight Program-A Resounding Success

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The vision van was parked outside of Hoopa High School. It served as a mobile lab so visitors to the One Sight clinic could receive their glasses on site./Photo by Rani Heitkamp

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The One Sight Program held for nine days from March 14 – 25 at the Hoopa Valley High School was a resounding success. Although final figures for the number of adults and children seen and the total amount of eyeglasses prescribed and delivered to local residents in the Klamath-Trinity area are still not available, best estimates are 1,000 children and 396 adults participated. Even those who did not need glasses received thorough eye exams.

Hosting the event, One Sight partnered in a joint venture with Walking Shield, Inc., a Native-owned and operated nonprofit that works closely with tribes to provide eye clinics. This was the 14th year that Walking Shield partnered with One Sight, a family of charitable programs dedicated to improving vision through outreach, research and education. Walking Shield's Executive Director, John Castillo and Program Manager, Marvin Thurman, participated in the event and were very pleased with the number of individuals served.

Staff from the K'ima:w Medical Clinic coordinated appointments and several staff members volunteered their time to help at the eye clinic. Volunteers did their best to accommodate all the clients who had made appointments, those on the waiting list, and walk-ins. Still, over 40 people remained on a waiting list and could not be served. One Sight simply ran out of time and glasses. K'ima:w's Community Health Representatives helped drop off eyeglasses to individuals who were unable to come pick them up.

Children and adults came from Burnt Ranch, Willow Creek, Hoopa, Weitchpec, and as far away as Happy Camp. On the first day, 96 adults received services. One Sight had only planned to serve a total of 300 adults. The first day used up almost one-third of the total amount of appointments allotted to adults.

Even though patients sat in multiple rows of chairs in a large room at the high school, the lines moved fairly quickly. Individuals received all types of eye exams in addition to the traditional viewing of eye charts that seemed a long way down the aisle. Tests were also administered to determine the potential for developing glaucoma or cataracts.

No individual was rushed through the process. After the eye exams, those who needed eyeglasses were directed to tables that each displayed trays of up-to-date styles of eyewear in all colors and shapes. One Sight and Walking Shield volunteers helped with suggestions.

In the ensuing weeks after the event, comments were heard throughout the valley from adults, parents, and children who received eyeglasses, some for the very first time.

K'ima:w Medical Records Director, Paula Gray, told about how her five-year old granddaughter used to sit at home right in front of the television. Her parents always told her to move back. They took her to the One Sight clinic and it turns out, she just couldn't see at all from a distance. Now, she can even sit in another room and still see the TV.

The best part of all with Gray's granddaughter is that she asked her mom if she can get another pair of glasses. She'd like to have one pair at home and one pair at school. It has really made a big difference in her life.

At the high school during the One Sight event, the young mother of a son who had already received his eyeglasses came over to Thurman to tell him her story. She was so enthused because her son now wanted to do his homework because he could see so much better with his new glasses. She was almost in tears.

The mother of another young child said that her daughter told her she could now see the leaves on the trees and the flowers that were blooming. The mom can't wait until her daughter gets the chance in warmer weather to see butterflies.

A man in Hoopa is still getting used to his new bifocals, but he also received a pair of reading glasses at the One Sight clinic. He had never worn glasses before.

"The hardest thing for me now is to stop reading," he said. "Sometimes I stay up until 2 or 3 am in the morning, reading, now that I can see."

Several staff members at K'ima:w who attended the clinic are thrilled with their new glasses. Many had tried to schedule an appointment with the eye doctor who comes to the clinic twice a month but had not been able to get in. Others were finding it difficult to schedule time off to go to Eureka for an eye exam and find eyeglasses. Going to the One Sight clinic saved them time and money.

"It was really convenient to do everything at one place," said a K'ima:w employee.

Another commented, "Wearing new glasses makes it so much easier to do my work. It's not so hard to read the charts, now."

A Hoopa resident who has worn glasses most of her adult life hadn't been able to afford to get new glasses for about 15 years. Now that she can see clearly again, she doesn't worry so much when she drives about not being able to read street signs in time to make a turn. Her daughter also went to the clinic and says it's an incredible difference between her new and old glasses – there's no eyestrain trying to see.

Members of the community who still need their eyeglasses fitted or adjusted and can make the trip to Eureka, services are provided at no cost at Sears and Costco.