

# Lions' KidSight helps kids see more clearly

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Cambridge ninth-grader Virginia Stone got the new eyeglasses she need thanks to the Lions' Project KidSight.

Virginia Stone hadn't been able to get new glasses for two years. LaShundia Sylvester started wearing glasses last year, but kept breaking them. Now, thanks to Lions Clubs, the two students seeing things much better.

Stone and Sylvester were among students at Cambridge High School in Garden City who participated in the Lions KidSight. They had their vision checked by the Plymouth Lions Club KidSight Team and then received assistance through local Lions Clubs in obtaining an eye exam and new glasses.

"I've been wearing glasses since kindergarten, but I wasn't able to get glasses for two years," said Stone. "I got these in March. They're great."

The Plymouth Lions Club began doing vision screenings in 2008 after hearing a presentation by the manager of the Project KidSight program for the Michigan Lions. According to Charles Cone, the club decided to purchase the specialized vision screening device as part of its commitment to community service.

"The club thought it would be a good way to serve our community, by screening children, free of charge, to detect potential vision problems at an early age," said Cone, chair of the club's KidSight. "Eight to 10 of our members received training on the Polaroid-type camera used and on the processing of the photos and paperwork."

When the club started the screening, it was limited by the state Board of Education to do only preschool-aged children and was restricted from going into the public schools.

"We screened at preschools and open air venues, such as Art-In-The-Park and Plymouth Fall Festival," Cone said. "We were also bound to City of Plymouth and Plymouth Township. We probably screened 300-350 kids."

Back then Project KidSight was affiliated with Children's Hospital of Michigan. All of photos and paperwork were sent to Children's Hospital where the photos were screened to ensure they met quality guidelines and criteria. They were then examined by a pediatric eye surgeon for any abnormalities.

Today, the team goes all over and screens children age 6 months and older. It's been to the Plymouth Library, Tutor Time, Cambridge High School in Garden City, a health fair in Highland Park, the Canton Corn Roast and Webster Elementary School in Livonia.

Jan Moy, a supervisor at Cambridge High School, helped coordinate the follow-up for the students. The local Lions Clubs provide vouchers to LensCrafters, where the students go to get an eye exam and new glasses.

"Each club provides a voucher," said Moy. "The Garden City, Westland and Dearborn Heights clubs provided the vouchers for students living in their communities, and Dearborn Heights also was willing to give vouchers for students who have no Lions Club in their area. Each club buys vouchers and then delivers them to LensCrafter with the individual's name on it."

According to Cone, the club's trained technicians are available upon request and will travel to other Detroit metropolitan communities. Saving children's sight is too important to not answer the call, if it is within a reasonable distance, he said, adding that there is no charge for the community service.

About 5 percent of children between age 1-5 experience reduced vision resulting from a serious disorder like lazy eye. If treated while the visual system is still maturing, many disorders can be corrected without surgery, and usually, normal vision can be restored.

"Through Project KidSight we can quickly and accurately identify potential vision problems without causing stress to the child," Cone said. "In less than one second our portable high-tech vision screeners measure and compare the refractive power of the child's eyes, pupil size and corneal alignment to age-based referral criteria. If the screening results in a referral, we provide a picture of the eyes and the result of eight different measures with a letter for the parent to submit to an ophthalmologist."

While the vision screenings have identified serious conditions that have been corrected by vision professionals, the screenings are not substitutes for eye examinations by professionals, Cone said.

"It is gratifying when appreciative parents tell us that indeed the condition identified was verified by an eye care professional and a correction was made – glasses or other treatment," he said.

For Sylvester, the new pair of glasses is a godsend.

"When I started wearing glasses, I kept breaking them," she said. "I broke four pair. Then I came to Cambridge, and I got a free pair."

She added that she's committed to taking care of her new glasses.

Project KidSight is a major program of Lions Clubs International. The project is administered in the state of Michigan by the Lions of Michigan Foundation. Several Districts in the state have purchased the specialized cameras. The Plymouth Lions Club purchased one to share with all clubs in the Detroit area.

Organizations that would like children screened in Wayne and Monroe counties can contact Plymouth Lions Charles Cone at 248-719-2567 or Lion Ted Robinson at 734-660-3566.