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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

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HEADLINE: Prevent Blindness Oklahoma Screens Local Children

BODY:

Oklahoma City, OK --

A boy named Matthew was in 3rd grade the first year Prevent Blindness Oklahoma screened at his school. He was referred for the next two years and his mother took him to the eye doctor each year. Results: no glasses needed. This past year he was a 6th grader and in his school district ALL students are screened. Referred again, this year his mother decided to take him to a DIFFERENT doctor who diagnosed cancer in one eye. A second opinion at St. Jude's diagnosed Matthew with Coat's Disease. The latest report to PBO indicates the doctors believe they will be able to save the eye. Can vision screening make a difference in a child's life? YES!

"Eighty percent of what a child learns is visually acquired," says Anita Schlaht, Director of Programs for Prevent Blindness Oklahoma, "and 86% of children never receive an eye exam." During the 2010-2011 school year the organization screened 278,698 children throughout the state of Oklahoma. Of those children, 32,090 were referred with a possible vision problem for a comprehensive eye exam. Prevent Blindness Oklahoma strives to educate the public on the importance of eye screenings. "Many children will struggle needlessly when simple vision correction could be the solution," says Schlaht.

If vision is the problem, early detection and proper correction can prevent permanent vision loss and negative attitudes toward school. "In a world where test scores and achievement make front-page news, Prevent Blindness Oklahoma is encouraging schools to make children's vision a priority," emphasizes Schlaht.

Prevent Blindness Oklahoma is the only nonprofit agency in Oklahoma dedicated exclusively to eye health and safety. Through their Children's Vision Screening Program, and a 26-year partnership with the Oklahoma Masons, free vision screening will be provided at:

Many children in Oklahoma can receive free exams and glasses through SoonerCare (Medicaid), Vision Service Plan benefits provided by PBO, or through our Vision Quest assistance program. Infants 0-1 yr. old may receive a free exam through the InfantSee program.

For more information on your child's eyesight, please call Anita Schlaht at Prevent Blindness Oklahoma, 405-848-7123 ext 103, or visit www.preventblindnessok.org

**For the exact number of children screened and referred, please contact the school for results.
Thank you for your support.**