



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collier County students receive gift of clear vision

NAPLES, Fla. (Oct. 2, 2012) – Assembled in the cafeteria of Golden Gate Middle School, 100 underprivileged and/or at-risk students who had their vision screened and were found in need of eyeglasses, experienced what it is like to see clearly. Led by Collier County School Superintendent Dr. Kamela Patton, the students simultaneously tried on their new prescription lenses, with smiles brightening their faces. “What a great day it is in these children’s lives,” Patton commented, while also reminiscing about a moment in a college lecture hall when she tried on a friend’s glasses and realized how much she had been missing.

The Golden Gate students are among 8,000 Collier County children in Title I schools that are undergoing vision screenings, each with a 20 percent statistical chance of being flagged for a comprehensive eye exam. If the students’ eyesight warrants glasses, they are fitted for the proper prescription. Within a few weeks, they receive two pairs of eyeglasses – one for home and one for school – all thanks to a vision initiative funded by Naples Children & Education Foundation, founders of Naples Winter Wine Festival. To date, 5,500 Collier County students in Title I schools have been screened and 175 have received two pairs of prescription lenses.

According to NCEF trustee John Scot Mueller, 90 percent of Collier County students who attend schools and early childhood centers in low-income areas need glasses, but don’t have them. “If you can’t see, you can’t learn. We wanted to rectify that for children who lacked the means to get glasses. These kids deserve a fair shot at success in school and beyond.”

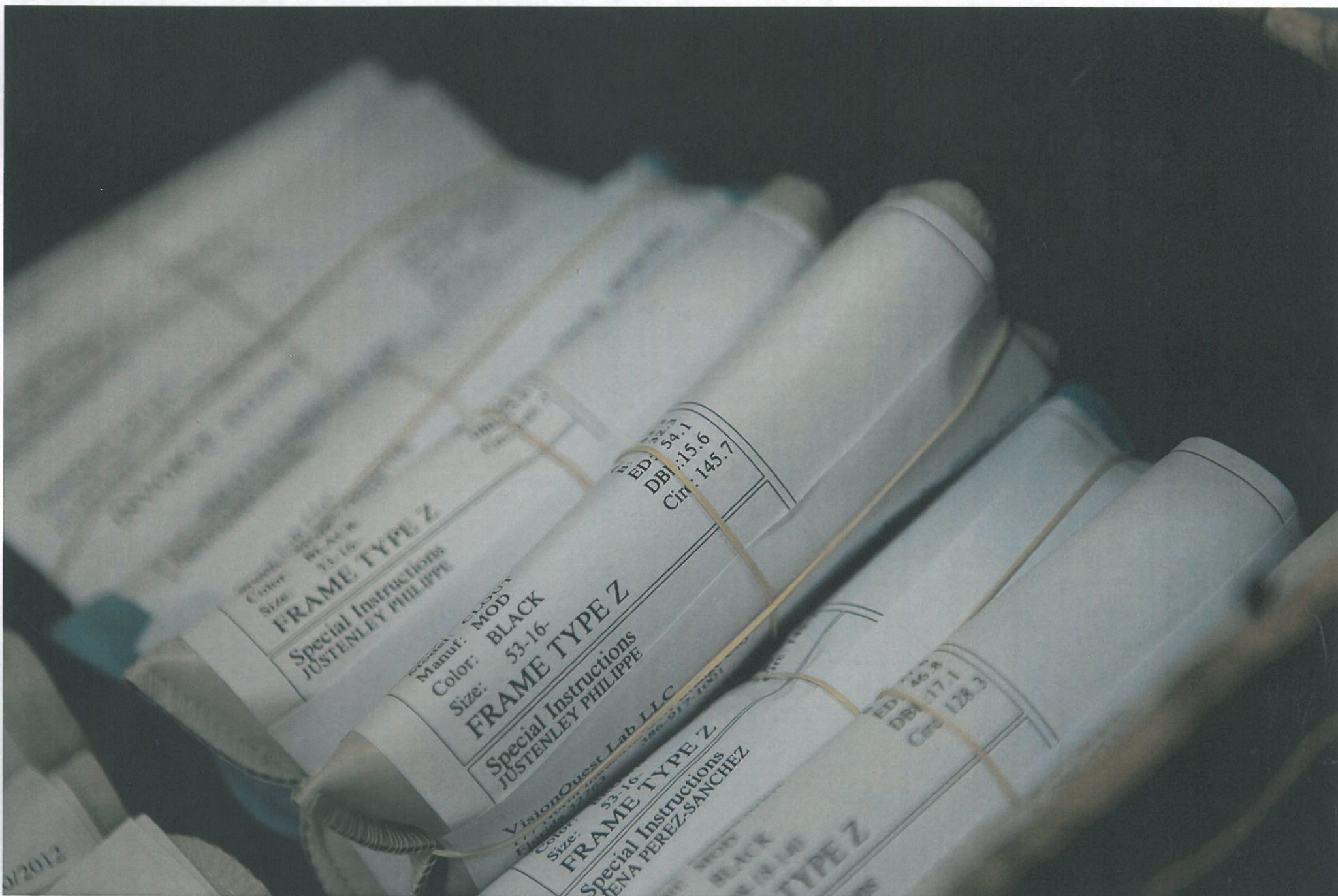
Funding for the vision initiative came from Naples Winter Wine Festival proceeds, with \$750,000 allocated for screenings and eyeglasses. The three-year initiative is being carried out through a partnership among NCEF, Collier County public schools and Florida’s Vision Quest.

Kelly Haynes, executive director of Florida’s Vision Quest and the lead vision screener for Collier County students, talked passionately about her own fifth-grade experience with failing grades due to very poor eyesight. “I want to take poor vision out of your struggles,” she told the assembled students.

According to Haynes, research shows that 80 percent of childhood learning is visual. To quickly assess vision problems for large numbers of students, Florida’s Vision Quest employs a highly accurate, high-tech tool called Spot. “It takes three-quarters of a second to do a vision screening, and with Spot we can screen hundreds of children a day,” Haynes said.

Since 2000, Naples Children & Education Foundation, which is governed by NCEF trustees, has been dedicated to making a profound and sustaining improvement in the lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Through the Naples Winter Wine Festival, NCEF has raised \$107 million since 2001, making it the most successful charity wine auction in the world. Proceeds have impacted more than 150,000 children through 36 charities. Major initiatives funded in collaboration with other private and public entities have included a pediatric dental clinic and an early learning center.

The 2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival will take place Jan. 25-27. For more information about Naples Winter Wine Festival and Naples Children & Education Foundation, visit www.napleswinefestival.com or call 888-837-4919.



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