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*With art*

**NAPLES CHILDREN & EDUCATION FOUNDATION ROLLS OUT NEW "NOW YOU SEE IT" MOBILE VISION PROGRAM -- THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

The Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF), founders of the Naples Winter Wine Festival, will launch another component within its comprehensive strategies to improve the lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier when it launches its new "Now You See It" Mobile Vision Program at Lely High School on Monday, September 9, 2013 at 7:30 am. Collier County Schools Superintendent Kamela Patton, together with NCEF Board Chairman Bob Clifford, will mark the occasion.

"The young people receiving glasses today and in the upcoming years will have not only improved vision, but also increased literacy, improved school grades, and a renewed interest in academics," comments Clifford. Thanks to the NCEF funding, Collier is the first county in Florida to have a dedicated mobile unit for vision examinations and dispensing prescription eyeglasses targeting underprivileged and at risk children.

Vision problems stifle the social, academic and developmental progress of many children in this county. That is to say; our children don't even know what they can't see until we reveal to them a world with corrected vision through prescription eyeglasses. NCEF research has indicated that 1 in 4 children in the United States have significant vision problems; among Title I students and academically and behaviorally at-risk children, up to 85% have vision problems that are either undetected or untreated.

In Collier County, children are screened for vision problems only in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. As a result, thousands of local kids are impaired as they strive to absorb the estimated 80% of learning that comes through the visual processing of information.

With this information in mind, NCEF in 2008 began its Children's Vision Initiative, affectionately referred to as "Now You See It." At that time, the organization partnered with Florida's Vision Quest to begin vision examinations and



provide prescription eyeglasses for 600 children in low-income schools. NCEF's 2010 follow-up Study of Child Well-Being in Collier confirmed that vision examination and eyeglasses remained a significant gap in services. As a result, it was determined that the pilot program should be expanded.

The "Now You See It" Mobile Vision Program, which represents Phase II of NCEF's Children's Vision Initiative, provides a more comprehensive approach in meeting the vision needs of every child at all Title I schools in Collier. Using a full-time optometrist stationed in a custom-designed, 37-foot pediatric mobile eye clinic, the "Now You See It" Mobile Vision Program will use the latest vision screening technology to assess approximately 20,000 children a year. Then it will provide follow-up comprehensive vision exams and two pairs of glasses (one for school and one for home) for those identified with poor vision. Summer camp experiences for children with limited or no sight will round out the effort.

Funding for the first three years of the NCEF Children's Vision Initiative is estimated at \$2 million. Program partners include not only Florida's Vision Quest and the Collier County School District, but also Lighthouse of Collier County, the Lions Club, Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida and the Collier County Department of Health.

"We believe that this "Now You See It" Mobile Vision Program will have significant impact on learning in Collier County," concludes Clifford. "We're delighted to see this program get on the road."

*For more information on the NCEF Children's Vision Initiative, visit <http://www.napleswinefestival.com/strategic-initiatives.php>*

*The Naples Children & Education Foundation, founded in 2000, is committed to supporting charitable programs that improve the physical, emotional and educational lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Its primary fundraiser, **the Naples Winter Wine Festival**, is the largest global event of its kind, and has raised in excess of \$110 million in its first 13 years for annual grants to 37 beneficiary organizations and 7 strategic initiatives. Festival dates for 2014 are January 24-26. Additional information is available at [www.napleswinefestival.com](http://www.napleswinefestival.com).*





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