

Baylor/Methodist Community Health Fund Grant Helps 1,400 Homeless Individuals Receive Vision Care.

Houston, Texas – February 12, 2008 – In April 2007 Prevent Blindness Texas and the Houston Ophthalmological Society were awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Baylor/Methodist Community Health Fund to support a new collaborative program, the Eye Care for the Homeless of Houston. This effort has brought the gift of sight to 1,400 of Houston's most impoverished and medically underserved citizens. Screening vision, providing eye examinations, and purchasing and delivering glasses has helped renew patients' ability to fill out a job application, see to ride a bus, and read.

At any given time, there are 12,000-14,000 homeless Houstonians of all ages. Poor vision is one of the most frequent complaints among the homeless. 90% of the homeless screened by Prevent Blindness fail screening tests compared to a 10% overall failure rate in Texas. Over the past year, 1,320 vouchers for eye service to the homeless have been distributed, and 1,120 people had complete examinations. 924 patients received free glasses. The number of clients completed a medical plan is much higher than reported in other screening programs. Follow-up through PBT collaboration with homeless shelter-based social workers is key to the program's success. Prevent Blindness Texas has also developed a web-based data system to collect, sort, track, and store client information.

An additional \$40,000 2008 -09 grant received from the Baylor/Methodist Community Health Fund will support ongoing operations of Eye Care for the Homeless of Houston. With additional grant and special event funding, Prevent Blindness Texas will continue to provide sight-saving programs for over 150,000 at-risk and underprivileged children and adults each year. Founded in 1956 in Houston, Prevent Blindness Texas is the largest affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, and now boasts eleven branch offices across Texas. PBT screened the vision of 100,000 children in 2006-2007 and provided thousands of prescription glasses through their network of ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians.

Program information and application forms for free glasses are available at www.preventblindness.org/TX. For more information about the work of Prevent Blindness Texas, or if you would like to volunteer, please call 713-526-2559, extension 107, and speak to PBT President Jim Hubbard or contact Houston Ophthalmological Society/PBT Project Medical Advisor Amy Coburn, MD at eyemed1@swbell.net.

Contact Information:

Jim B. Hubbard, President
Prevent Blindness Texas
713-526-2559, extension 107
Preventblindness.org/TX
jhubbard@preventblindnesstexas.org