

# C O N S U L T A N T S ' O R N E R



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Editor: Riki Nitz



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## **STRESS REDUCTION TIPS**

STAND UP AND STRETCH  
MAKE DUPLICATE KEYS  
SMILE  
LISTEN MORE  
CLEAN OUT ONE CLOSET  
JOURNAL  
GIVE SOMEONE A HUG  
CHERISH THOSE YOU LOVE  
CHERISH YOURSELF

## Educational Programs and Services Study Update

The second meeting of the Task Force studying the educational programs and services in SD for children with visual impairments was held in Pierre in early December 2007. Each of the sub committees reported on their findings and there was a great deal of good interaction and discussion. Dr. Phil Hatlen provided the leadership for the group. He made three trips to SD to talk with participants and visit programs around the state.

The Task Force used the *National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities* as the framework for their study. The ten areas of study were:

1. Initial Referral to a VI Professional within 30 days
2. Commitment to Parent Partnerships
3. Sufficient Quantity of Trained VI Professionals
4. Caseloads Determined by Student Need
5. Access to Educational Placement Options
6. Comprehensive Evaluations in Academic and Skills of Blindness
7. Accessible Instructional Materials
8. Direct Instruction in the "Expanded Core Curriculum"
9. Facilitating Successful Transition
10. Professional Development

Dr. Hatlen will be presenting his report to the SD Board of Regents at their next meeting on March 28, 2008 in Pierre. The report will provide guidance for the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired as we work to improve the education of children with vision loss in South Dakota.

Dr. Marje Kaiser, SDSBVI Superintendent

### Test Your Eyeglasses "Eye-Q"

#### Part 2

Eyeglasses are *eyeglasses*—right? Are you sure? Try the three questions below to see if you have a high eyeglasses "Eye-Q"!

1. A metal used for eyeglass frames that will bend, but not break, is called:
  - a. Miracle
  - b. Stainless steel
  - c. Memory metal
2. High-index and aspheric lenses:
  - a. are scratch-proof
  - b. reduce glare
  - c. are thinner than other lenses
  - d. give you X-ray vision
3. The additional prescription in a trifocal versus a bifocal is usually in what range?
  - a. near
  - b. intermediate
  - c. far

(Answers—Page 5)

[www.allaboutvision.com/eyeglasses](http://www.allaboutvision.com/eyeglasses)

Misprint Correction: For those readers who took the Eyeglasses "Eye-Q" Quiz Part 1 in our Fall Newsletter, the correct answer to Question 2 is *d* not *b*. *I do apologize—Riki.*

**AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**  
**ESSAY CONTEST**  
**STUDENTS—CONSUMERS—VISION PROFESSIONALS**

In celebration of 150 years of building independence for people who are blind and visually impaired, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is conducting an *Essay Contest*.

Many lives have been enhanced in countless ways by the specialized materials, products, and services needed for education and life that APH has provided throughout its existence.

We are inviting blind and visually impaired\* children, adults, and the professionals who serve them, to tell us how APH products have made an impact on their lives.

The contest is open to:

- ◆ Students with a visual impairment who are enrolled in grades 3 through 12 for the 2007-2008 academic year
- ◆ Adult consumers of APH products
- ◆ Teachers of those who are visually impaired, rehabilitation counselors, and other professionals in the field of blindness.

The deadline for entry is April 1, 2008. The entry form, including the official topic, number of words, and all guidelines for preparing and submitting an essay, is posted on the APH website at: [www.aph.org/essay.html](http://www.aph.org/essay.html).

For print or braille copies of the entry form, contact Becky Snider:

Phone: 800-223-1839 or 502-895-2405, ext. 356/Fax: 502-899-2363/Email: [rsnider@aph.org](mailto:rsnider@aph.org)

\*For the purposes of this contest, visual impairment is defined as corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, or a visual field limited to 20 degrees or less. This includes those who function at the definition of blindness (FDB) listed above due to brain injury or dysfunction.

**SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL ART COMPETITION FOR ARTISTS WHO ARE  
BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) invites visually impaired and blind artists of all ages to submit artwork for its Seventeenth Annual International Art Competition, *APH InSights 2008*.

There are two deadlines this year:

- ◆ April 1, 2008 is the deadline for entries from preschool through high school.
- ◆ April 15, 2008 is the deadline for entries from adult artists.

To enter, artists must meet this definition of blindness: corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, or a visual field limited to 20 degrees or less.

Last year, over 500 entries were received. From these, jurors selected eighty-one pieces for the exhibition, which was shown in Louisville KY in October 2007.

Artists may enter a single artwork created in any visual art medium, including (but not limited to), painting, drawing, printmaking, fiber, metal, or wood. Award winners receive a cash award and a ribbon. They are invited to come to Louisville to receive their awards at the October meeting of APH Ex Officio Trustees. Last year, thirteen award winners attended the presentation. (While APH cannot pay the full travel cost of those attending, a stipend to assist with travel is available.)

By the end of February, competition rules and entry forms will be posted on the APH web site: [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org). Artists may also contact APH to request a copy of the entry form and rules by calling 800-223-1839, ext. 357, 502-895-2405, ext. 357, or by sending email to [rwilliams@aph.org](mailto:rwilliams@aph.org).

## APH Educational Materials

<http://www.aph.org>

### **Everyday Activities Calendar Exposure to Experiences for Enjoyment**

The *Everyday Activities Calendar* is a large print/braille calendar that gives suggestions for a fun preschool activity for each day of the year. Activities are drawn from everyday occurrences and make use of easily accessible, low cost materials.

The calendar is formatted with two days per page and is designed so the user may begin at any point. It comes in a three-ring binder with color dividers between each month. It does not track any specific year, but can be used year after year.

Recommended ages: 3 to 8 years

This product is available from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) for purchase and can also be borrowed from your area Outreach Vision Consultant. For more information on this product or other APH products, please contact your area Outreach Vision Consultant.

### **Parent Tips for Reading to Your Child**

- Vary the length and subject matter of your readings.
- Read books that you enjoy. Your child will know if you're faking it.
- Before you begin, always read the name of the book and the author and illustrator, no matter how many times you have read the book.
- The first time you read a book, discuss the illustration on the cover. "What do you think this book is going to be about?"
- The art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually. Don't get discouraged if your child has trouble paying attention.
- As you read, keep your child involved by occasionally asking, "What do you think is going to happen next?"
- Reading aloud does not come naturally to most people. To do it successfully and with ease, you must practice.

(Prepared by Miss Mehlhaff, 1st grade teacher, May Overby Elementary School, Aberdeen Public Schools)

### **Books Featuring Characters with Blindness and Visual Impairment**

Happy Birthday, Grampie by Susan Pearson

Grades K-3

*Martha takes great care to make just the right gift for her grandfather who has lost his vision.*

One of Us by Nikki Amdur

Grades 3-6

*When Nora moves to a new town, she becomes friends with Jerry, who is blind.*

Can You Feel the Thunder by Lynn E. McElfrest

Grades 7-12

*Thirteen-year-old Mic Parsons struggles with mixed feelings about his deaf and blind sister while at the same time he makes his way through the turmoil of junior high.*



## **NATIONAL BRAILLE PRESS**

### **Dr. Seuss 2008 Calendar**

By Dr. Seuss—For All ages!

Throughout his life, Dr. Seuss had two goals — to make us laugh, and to make us think. He said, "I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells....and that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

Once again, Dr. Seuss puts his own unique spin on an NBP Favorite—an annual print/braille calendar! This 2008 print/braille calendar includes twelve scenes and quotes from Dr. Seuss's books, each providing laughter and insight to help keep you inspired throughout the year.

The braille is included on clear plastic sheets that go right over the print pages, and all pictures are described. And as always, the calendar features a Special Bonus — a sheet of sixty full-color stickers of Dr. Seuss's more famous characters to mark birthdays, appointments, and other important days.

To order the 2008 Dr. Seuss print/braille calendar, and before they sell out, go to:

<http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/2008SEUSS.html>

### **Valentines for 2008! "Celebrating Good Friends"**

This year's print/braille Valentine from National Braille Press celebrates friendship. Perfect for passing out to classmates or for mailing to family and friends, these Valentines feature a four-color image of a person with an embossed BIG heart, and beneath the image is the following message (in print and braille):

*good friends make  
good valentines*

To order valentines (and see this year's design), or to check out discounted 2007 Valentines, go to: <http://www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/VAL08-32.html>

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

*Statewide Special Education Conference*  
Pierre SD—March 16-18, 2008

*Outreach Forum*  
Nashville TN—April 23-26, 2008

*AER Dakotas Chapter*  
Grand Forks SD—May 7-9, 2008

*Dare to Dream Conference*  
Pierre SD—June 8-10, 2008

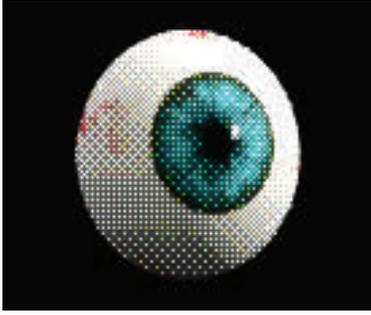
*AER International*  
Chicago IL—July 22-27, 2008

*Focus on Success*  
Sioux Falls—September 30-October 2, 2008



# FOCUS ON THE EYE

## UVEITIS

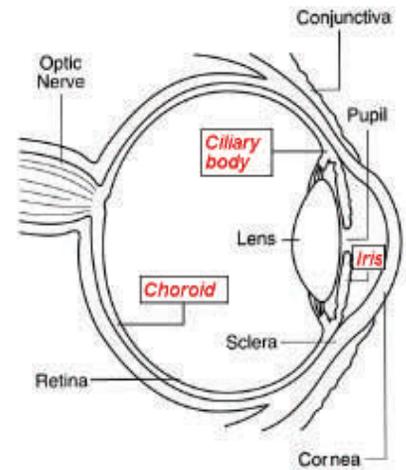


### Description

Uveitis (U'VE-I-TIS) is a rare, serious medical condition that affects vision. It is inflammation in the middle layer of the eye that carries the blood supply to other parts of the eye. This middle layer of the eye is called the "uvea" (or uveal tract). The uvea is the vascular layer of the eye sandwiched between the retina and the white of the eye (sclera). It extends toward the front of the eye and consists of the iris, choroid layer, and ciliary body. The most common type of uveitis is an inflammation of the iris called iritis (anterior uveitis). Uveitis is like having inflammation from a burn, but inside the eye. Inflammation occurring inside the eye is a medical emergency. Uveitis can be quite serious and may lead to permanent vision loss. Early diagnosis and treatment are important.

Uveitis is the third leading cause of preventable blindness in the developed world. Despite this, it is a rare disease. Uveitis can develop at any age, but is most common in people ages 20 to 50. It is found in all races and occurs worldwide. It is not contagious. Patients with uveitis starting before the age of 16 years represent 5% to 10% of all cases of uveitis.

Uveitis can be caused by infection, an injury to the eye, or by an autoimmune illness. Uveitis can exist alone, or sometimes it is a sign of other illness. For example, about 10% of children with Juvenile Idiopathic (Rheumatoid) Arthritis will develop eye inflammation (uveitis). Sometimes the exact cause of the child's uveitis cannot be determined. Most children who have uveitis have autoimmune uveitis.



### Signs/Symptoms

Uveitis symptoms include pain or redness in the eye, sensitivity to light (photophobia), blurred or decreased vision, problems with "glare", seeing black spots (called "floaters"), detached retina, and sometimes, abnormal eye movement or alignment. Children with uveitis are at increased risk for developing glaucoma and cataracts. Some children with uveitis will become blind. Most children with uveitis will require years of medical treatment in an effort to save their vision. Roughly half of the children with uveitis will not have symptoms to warn them of disease activity. In this instance, the uveitis is usually discovered after there has been irreversible vision loss caused by damage to the retina or optic nerve.

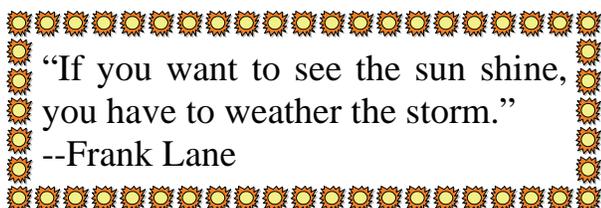
### Diagnosis/Treatment

Doctors diagnose uveitis when they see children with inflammation cells inside the eye during the eye examination. An ophthalmologist (eye MD) can see the inflammation cells with a special microscope called a slit lamp. These cells can be counted. The cell count is one of the pieces of information the doctor uses to determine how severe the disease is. The general ophthalmologist or pediatric ophthalmologist will know how to diagnose uveitis. A child who is thought to have uveitis should be referred to a specialist for further assessment and treatment.

The main goals of treatment are to preserve a high level of vision and social functioning and to maintain a good quality of life. To achieve these goals, doctors recommend treatments to reduce swelling inside the eye and to put the disease into remission. A student with uveitis will have frequent doctor's appointments and will have to take medications that suppress inflammation and modify how the immune system works. These medications may be in eye drops, given in a shot, taken by mouth (pills), or some combinations of these treatments. Some children will require eye surgery to remove the jelly-like material (vitreous) in the eye. Some children will require special eye glasses or contact lenses to aid their vision. Children with chronic or severe forms of uveitis will require immunosuppressive chemotherapy to protect their vision.

The part of the eye affected by uveitis – either the front (anterior) or back (posterior) of the uvea – may determine the duration of the condition. With proper treatment, anterior uveitis can clear up in a matter of days to weeks. Posterior uveitis, on the other hand, may last several months or years and could permanently alter one's vision.

(Continued on Page 8)



## UVEITIS (Continued from Page 7)

### Educational Implications

- ◆ Vision may fluctuate from relatively "normal" to very poor. Children with uveitis may be able to read with little assistance one month and then may need magnification, such as large print, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), and/or low vision devices, the next. In addition, distance low vision devices such as a telescope may be needed. Or, the visual problems may be relatively stable and predictable and minimal accommodations are required.
- ◆ Glare can be a big problem both inside and outside. Average to dim lighting inside and wearing tinted lenses outside may be beneficial.
- ◆ Visual fatigue may be problematic and needs to be monitored.
- ◆ Children requiring chemotherapy will have days when they feel sick or have less energy or are unable to focus.
- ◆ Because the damage caused by uveitis is inside the eye, the student may show few outward signs of the disease. Eye inflammation may not be noticeable except to a trained physician aided by special medical equipment, but its effects on the student are noticeable. It is very important to understand that the symptoms and the limitations of the student are quite real, even though the disease may not be obvious to you. The student with uveitis may not complain, so it is crucial to be alert for clues that he or she is having difficulty. These might include symptoms such as squinting, avoiding lights, or struggling to see written material. The only clue may be observing difficulty completing certain visually demanding tasks. Children with uveitis may try to ignore or hide changes in their vision or other symptoms because they want to be like their classmates.
- ◆ Communication with the child's family is crucial to understanding how a particular student is doing and what specific adaptations will need to be implemented.

### Sources

<http://www.uveitis.org/kids/school/guidelines.htm#start>

<http://www.parsplanitis.org/pplit.htm>



### **Aberdeen Area Family Support Group / SD NAPVI Chapter**

The Family Support Group for families in Aberdeen and surrounding areas met in September. Susan LaVenture, the Executive Director from the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI), presented on Special Education and the Law with regards to visual impairments (IDEA). At the November meeting, families had the opportunity to learn how to make a "Portfolio" of their child, courtesy of Teresa Nold, Deaf/Blind Family Specialist (and Parent). During the December meeting, Teresa was able to join us again and talked with parents about resources available for families in SD. A parent from Sioux Falls also joined the group. In addition, the new President of NAPVI, Doug Halverson, traveled from Fargo, ND to talk with parents about starting their own NAPVI affiliate here in SD. There was great interest in this and the group of parents present decided to do so. Board members were selected and a meeting date set to initiate the process. A NAPVI representative will be coming in January to help board members get started. Look for more exciting news about your new SD NAPVI Chapter. Anyone can join the Chapter by simply becoming a member of NAPVI.

For more information on NAPVI, go to [www.spedex.com/napvi/](http://www.spedex.com/napvi/).

If you are interested in joining this group of parents, call Amy Scepaniak at 626-2580 or email her at [scepania@sdsbvi.northern.edu](mailto:scepania@sdsbvi.northern.edu).

*WEB SITES—kids, parents, teachers*

[unmuseumn.mus.pa.us/crr/](http://unmuseumn.mus.pa.us/crr/)

In the Children's Reading Room you will find a selection of stories you can print out and read to your children over and over again. Some of the characters have put their own homepage up on the web here for you to visit too.

<http://bvi.growingstrong.org>

This website provides resources for parents of blind children through links for vision related websites and email discussion groups regarding the eye and visual impairment, blindness and early childhood, and meeting your child's educational needs.

[www.lazyreaders.com](http://www.lazyreaders.com)

The mission of this website is to increase interest in reading for personal pleasure by providing cool, short book recommendations for all ages—where to go to when you want to find quality books to read that don't take a lot of time.

[www.everythingbraille.com](http://www.everythingbraille.com)

This braille resource website from National Braille Press provides many links for braille information for parents & teachers—About Braille/Braille Publications/Adaptive Technology/Tactile Graphics/Braille Fun & Games/Braille Music.

[sdstatelibrary.com/forkids/flash.htm](http://sdstatelibrary.com/forkids/flash.htm)

This "For Kids" site has links to many additional sites with activities for kids, including reading.



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