Happy Valentine's Day!

Your Eyes and Heart

We know the eyes are the window to the soul, but did you know they are also the window to your health, specifically your cardiovascular health? Evidence suggests that the eyes and the heart, two very different organs, have more in common than you might expect. They share many characteristics that may help in the detection, prevention, and treatment of multiple health conditions.

Researchers have found that approximately half of the nearly 2.2 billion cases of vision impairment worldwide could be improved, or even prevented, by taking simple steps to improve your overall cardiovascular health. In addition, doctors have learned that a regular annual eye exam is the most reliable, non-invasive way to identify a number of serious—often fatal—cardiovascular conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

Obviously, left untreated, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes result in debilitating and even deadly outcomes, but over time they also result in specific vision issues, including age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. The good news is that researchers now believe nearly 50% of all eye health issues can be improved or prevented by making heart-healthy lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, living an active lifestyle, losing weight, eating a heart and eye-healthy diet, and reducing stress.

An annual eye exam can detect risk factors consistent with heart disease much sooner than tests and checkups conducted during an annual physical. So, that being said, make sure to schedule your annual eye exam and discuss the findings in detail with your optometrist.

Board inSight

Q&A with FLLEC Board Member Dawn DeArmond

Retired president and CEO of Kansas
Big Brothers Big Sisters, FLLEC Board Member Dawn DeArmond shares with us some of her insights...

**Q** What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish as a FLLEC Board Member?
I hope to help the clinic raise money in order to serve as many patients as possible in our community.

**Q** What do you think is your best attribute you bring to FLLEC?
I think that my experience as CEO of a large non-profit brings many helpful attributes to FLLEC.

**Q** What do you see in the future for FLLEC?
I see our marketing, outreach, and fundraising growing in order to expand our services and help more people in need of quality eye care.

**Q** What is the best piece of advice you’ve ever given?
As a professional, as I was advancing into the CEO position of my job, my mentor would tell me to always do what’s best for the agency. These decisions may be hard or uncomfortable but think of what’s best for the clients in our program. I have passed this same advice on to others.

My grandmother always said, “never return a dish empty.” Meaning that if someone brought you food and left their dish, or if you borrowed something, always take them something in return for their kindness. I try to pass this advice on to others.

**Q** Do you have any skills or talents that most people don’t know about?
Gardening is something I have been doing since I have stopped working. I am also learning how to canning. Most of my friends and family laugh when I tell them I have just canned a bunch of pickles or tomatoes because I have never been one to spend much time in the kitchen. I also like to mow the grass and I am good at it. I have my own riding lawn mower and spend many hours on it in the summer in Tennessee. Everyone says, “why don’t you just hire to have that done?” I really enjoy working outside and helping Larry on our 62-acre property. (I even have a chainsaw!)

**Q** What’s the one thing you can’t live without?
Spending time with friends and family. Especially our grandsons. They are so much fun to be around and watching them grow and learn brings me a lot of pleasure.

**Q** What’s your favorite hobby?
I don’t have a favorite because I like many things. I read everyday and often. I like to collect rocks, seashells or other natural items. I like fishing, boating, walking, biking, art shows, traveling, along with learning new things.
Lots of books, fire starters and my husband Larry.

**Q How do you think your friends would describe you?**
I think my friends would say that I am a good listener, fun and likes a good party!

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**Vasari Cares Foundation Funds Eye Care Equipment for the Clinic**

Vasari Cares Foundation, Inc. recently awarded a $3,500 grant to the Florida Lions Eye Clinic, Inc. (FLLEC), specifically for the purchase of a new Slit Lamp.

“A Slit Lamp is a diagnostic instrument that gives an ophthalmologist a clear look at the structures at the front and inside of the eye. The Clinic is in need of a replacement, and this funding came at the perfect time!”, said Robin Goldstone Garcia, FLLEC Executive Director. “This instrument is key in determining eye health and detecting diseases, so you can imagine how appreciative we are of their generosity.”

The mission of the Vasari Cares Foundation is to provide support and assistance to selected charities that will impact the local community by mobilizing the power of Vasari volunteers and capitalizing on their generosity. The grants awarded address underlying social and economic challenges contributing to poor outcomes in the communities served, such as poverty, housing, and health care.

*Thank you Vasari!*
**A Historic Event**

Many years ago, in 2008, while volunteering at the Senior Friendship Center in Naples, Howard Freedman approached Al Cinotti and me to take a look at the almost completed Eye Clinic that the Bonita Springs Lions Club had just built. Joe Carpenteri joined us later on and the four of us suggested changes that the clinic would need.

So, here we are some years later, in December 2021, as the Florida Lions Eye Clinic original ophthalmologists, D’Artagnan (Howard Freedman) and the three Musketeers getting together for an historic meal.

Donald Cinotti, son of Al and an ophthalmologist in New Jersey, wanted to cook dinner for his father’s buddies and to honor his father’s 99th birthday. My wife Anita, our grandson Ben, Joe Carpenteri and his daughter, Howard and Pam Freedman and I rounded out the group along with Donald’s lovely wife Paulette.

What a lovely night, with lots of stories, laughs, and remembrances. Also historic in the Bonita Springs Lions Club fulfilling the mission of Lionism and building the only freestanding, totally free eye clinic in Florida. What a feather in their cap.

The photo above shows us with Donald. This will be a night to remember and certainly will live on in the annals of the Florida Lions Eye Clinic. I feel totally honored to be included from the onset and my experiences serving the Clinic have added years and happiness to my life.

*Dick Shapiro – Author, Ophthalmologist, Founder, Friend, and Volunteer of the Florida Lions Eye Clinic*

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**Reducing Your Risk for AMD**

February is **National Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Low Vision Awareness Month**. AMD is the leading cause of low vision and blindness in Americans age 60 years and older and affects 1.6 million Americans. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, the rates of AMD are expected to reach “epidemic proportions.” AMD is a progressive disease with no known cure.

Practicing healthy daily lifestyle habits can reduce your risk for developing AMD. A healthy diet, not smoking and maintaining healthy blood pressure are important first steps. Other healthy habits that can lower the risk of AMD include:

- Eat a diet with plenty of green, leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, and collard greens, and fresh fruit.

- Fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids is good for eye health. Try to include it in your diet at least once or twice a week. Types of fish that are high in omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring, and albacore tuna.
It’s important to keep your body healthy. Maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The healthier your body, the more it can foster good eye health.

- Protect your eyes. Wear sunglasses and a hat with a visor in bright sunlight to protect your eyes from potentially harmful ultra-violet (UV) light and blue light.

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The Naples Woman’s Club Supports Florida Lions Eye Clinic’s Vision Programs for Children

The Naples Woman’s Club recently awarded a $10,000 grant to the Florida Lions Eye Clinic (FLLEC). The funding will provide the means to serve an increased number of children at the Clinic.

“We are thrilled to have the support of The Naples Woman’s Club,” said Robin Goldstone Garcia, FLLEC Executive Director. “Through their generous donation, we will be able to treat an increased number of children and continue working towards our goal of providing no cost eyecare to everyone in the community in need of our services. They truly have made a difference for us, and we are extremely grateful!”

"Our philanthropic grants program supports local nonprofits and charitable organizations that address issues facing the community and its residents in need with priority given to children’s needs, hunger, homelessness and women's needs," said Valerie White, President of the Naples Woman's Club. “Since its founding in 1932, the Naples Woman’s Club has generously donated to causes that have enhanced our community. In the past 5 years, we donated nearly $450,000 to meet community needs.”

Thank you Naples Women's Club!

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Amazon Smile is a simple way for you to support the Florida Lions Eye Clinic every time you shop, at no cost to you. It's easy, just enter smile.amazon.com, and Amazon will ask you to select a charity of your choice.

You’ll find the exact same low prices, selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the Florida Lions Eye Clinic. Amazon Smile is also available on the Amazon Shopping app on your phone. You can find it in the App Store for iOS or Google Play for Android.