

# Prevent Blindness America: The Sight Saving People



## Mission Statement

The mission of Prevent Blindness America is to preserve sight and prevent blindness.

Founded in 1908, we're the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, PBA touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research.

These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America.

## Why is our mission so important?

Blindness and visual impairments exact a great price from individuals and society. Vision loss robs people of their independence, mobility and quality of life. Blindness and visual impairment are also an enormous cost to society, estimated conservatively at \$51.4 billion annually.

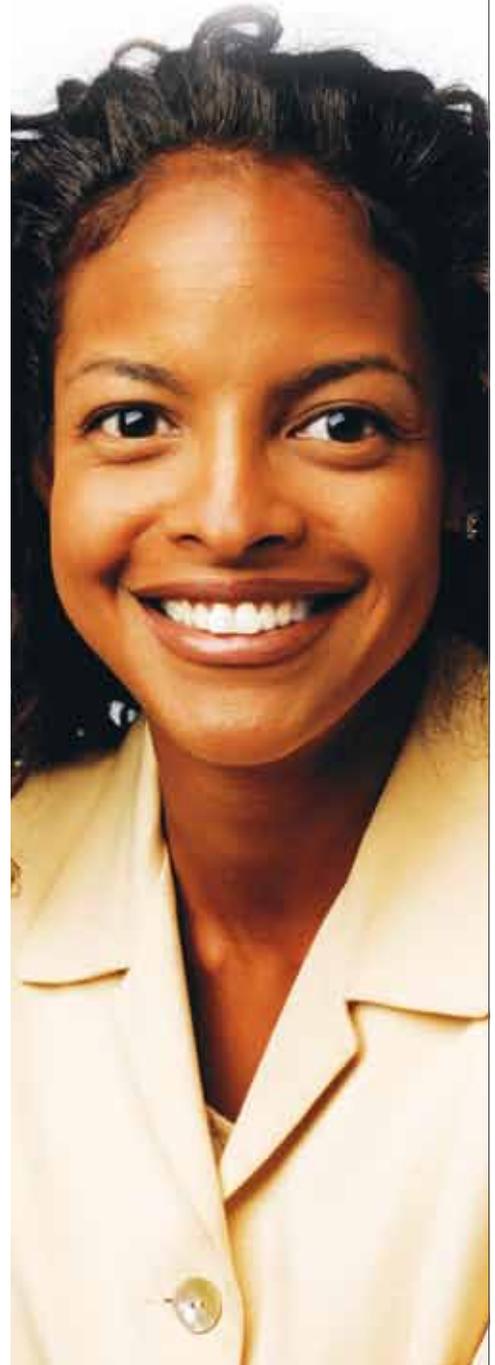
## What are the leading causes of blindness?

In adults, the most common eye diseases are glaucoma, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. In children, serious eye disorders include "lazy eye" (amblyopia), and strabismus (crossed eyes). Eye injuries in both adults and children, at home and the workplace, are also a leading cause of permanent sight loss.

## Consider these important facts:

- More than 1.1 million Americans are legally blind and an additional 50,000 people lose their sight each year, yet half of all blindness can be prevented.
- Between 2 and 3 million people have glaucoma...but half don't even know it.
- Blindness is the number one disabling complication of diabetes. Diabetic retinopathy is one of the leading causes of new cases of blindness.
- One in every 20 preschool children has an eye problem that, if left uncorrected, can lead to permanent vision loss.
- Nearly 2,000 potentially blinding workplace eye injuries happen each day.

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# The Sight Saving People—Continued

## What are our programs and services?

We offer many programs and services to help fight blindness and save sight:

- Adult and children’s vision screening;
- Patient and public education programs;
- School-based programs and curriculum;
- Professional education and training;
- The Vision Health Resource Center: 800.331.2020;
- Advocacy and research;
- Wise Owl workplace eye safety program;

## Our Achievements

- 1908** Spurred to action after learning that 30 percent of blindness in children was easily preventable, volunteers banded together to organize the forerunner of today’s PBA.
- 1917** Successfully led legislation that virtually eliminated a leading cause of blindness in infants, called ophthalmia neonatorum.
- 1926** Created the first volunteer-run preschool vision screening program in the United States.
- 1942** Conducted the first glaucoma detection program in the United States.
- 1944** Organized the first volunteer glaucoma screening program in the United States.
- 1948** Created the Wise Owl Club of America, an industrial and school eye safety incentive program that has since recognized more than 86,000 Americans for wearing proper eye protection.
- 1956** Marshalled resources that developed equipment to test the vision of infants.
- 1972** Spearheaded legislation to require impact-resistant lenses in all eyewear.
- 1981** Launched the first professional and public education programs on diabetic eye disease, the fastest growing cause of new cases of blindness.
- 1983** Introduced the first home eye test for adults so that Americans could determine if they are seeing as well as they should.
- 1985** Released a national study that revealed blindness prevention as the third most important health concern among Americans.
- 1991** Initiated a program called Glaucoma High Risk Alert to educate Americans about the high risk of glaucoma.
- 1994** The National Society to Prevent Blindness changed its name to Prevent Blindness America.
- 1995** Introduced adult vision screening and photoscreening training programs.
- 1996** Developed a web presence at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org) to educate people about proper vision care.
- 2002** Published the Vision Problems in the U.S. report on the prevalence and burden of age-related eye disease in America.
- 2003** Helped establish a vision research and prevention program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Launched the Congressional Vision Caucus, a bipartisan coalition of Congressional Members.
- 2004** Working with key public health and research organizations, published a road map for national public health policy: the Vision Problems Action Plan: A National Public Health Strategy.
- 2006** Established the “Eyes on Capitol Hill” campaign, bringing more than 100 patients and vision advocates to Washington, D.C. to discuss vision health policies with legislators.
- 2007** Published the groundbreaking Economic Impact of Vision Problems report, detailing the toll of major adult eye disorders, vision impairment and blindness, totaling \$51.4 billion annually, on the U.S. economy.
- 2008** Launched a national public service campaign to educate Americans about the need for regular eye exams.