

# FOUNDATION UPDATE

## Florida events highlight Phillips Eye Institute's community service

*By Larry Shapiro, board member and campaign co-chair, Phillips Eye Institute Foundation*



*Friends of Phillips Eye Institute Foundation gathered recently at two events in Florida to learn about its community service activities. Left, John Gordon, legendary Minnesota Twins broadcaster, visited with attendees at the Fort Myers event.*

As co-chair of the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation's Investing in Sight, Changing Lives Campaign, I was proud to join Bev Fritz, our executive director, restaurateur Larry D'Amico, Minnesota Twins President David St. Peter, and legendary Twins radio broadcaster John Gordon in recently hosting two incredible events in Florida. On March 10 and 11, nearly 60 people gathered at the Botanical Gardens in Naples and then the CenturyLink Sports Complex in Fort Myers to learn about the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation's exciting community service activities.

Bev Fritz and I had the pleasure of sharing with the group important information about the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation's current endeavors – the investment in technology that has made the Phillips Eye Institute a national center for excellence in eye care; the Transportation Program that removes the barriers that often prevent elderly members of our community from obtaining needed eye care and surgeries; and the Early Youth Eyecare (E.Y.E.) Community Initiative that opens important doors for learning by annually testing the vision of tens of thousands of grade school children in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and then providing those in need with free corrective lenses and even surgeries.

It was particularly exciting telling everyone about how important gifts from the Minnesota Twins and others have been used to construct the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile, the first and only mobile eye clinic in the region. We were all touched by John Gordon's personal account of how undetected preventable eye disease shortened Kirby's career, and we were deeply moved as John recreated his famous World Series Game 6 "touch 'em all Kirby, touch 'em all" home run call. With the financial support of those in attendance at our events in Florida, and important contributions from many others, we are excited that the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile will permit the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation to touch so many more in our community who need quality vision care.

Dear friend of  
Phillips Eye Institute  
Foundation,

Thanks to gifts from people like you, the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation can provide nearly 5,000 rides annually to and from Phillips Eye Institute. A Harris poll states a nearly universal agreement (98 percent) among older Americans that maintaining a sense of independence and mobility is extremely important.

Our Transportation Program routinely earns the highest score possible in our patient satisfaction surveys. We like to think this is the neighborly way of helping our patients.

Warmest appreciation  
to you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beverly Fritz".

*Beverly Fritz  
executive director  
Phillips Eye Institute  
Foundation*

# A father's legacy: Giving hope to those with vision loss



*Jeanne Poepl's parents, Rusty and Mary Jane Poepl.*

## What is a telescopic implant?

A telescopic implant is a new device recently approved for people with advanced macular degeneration who meet specific diagnostic criteria. When combined with intensive vision rehabilitation training, the device can help a person to perform daily living tasks and enjoy social interactions more fully. To learn more, call 612-775-8842.

Jeanne Poepl learned a lot from her dad, Rusty Poepl, who died in 2008 at the age of 95. Among the many gifts he passed on was an example of how to age gracefully – despite the devastating impact of vision loss. It is a lesson that has stayed with Poepl and even inspired a recent gift to Phillips Eye Institute Foundation.

Rusty was diagnosed with macular degeneration while in his mid-80s. “The first thing to go was driving,” Poepl recalled. “But to be honest, he sort of enjoyed having my mother take over the driving. He would always tell us, ‘I’m the best gawker in town.’”

But as time went on, vision loss took a toll on his independence, personal interests and quality of life. “He coped beautifully, but this was a man who played 12 musical instruments and read four newspapers a day,” said Poepl.

When Poepl learned that Phillips Eye Institute can offer a new telescopic implant treatment for some people with macular degeneration, she wanted to help. Her family’s foundation, the Rusty and Mary Jane Poepl Foundation, was launched a few years ago. Its goal is to honor her parents through charitable giving that focuses on aging issues, music and education.

Poepl knows that if her dad’s vision could have been improved, it would have enriched the last years of his life even more. “We thought this would be a wonderful way to honor our dad,” she said. “This allows us to give someone hope that he or she will see better.”

***Learn how you can support Phillips Eye Institute Foundation and give others the gift of good vision. Call Bev Fritz at 612-775-8758 or visit [allinahealth.org/investinsight](http://allinahealth.org/investinsight).***

## INVESTING IN SIGHT



## CHANGING LIVES

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***[allinahealth.org/investinsight](http://allinahealth.org/investinsight)***





## Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile School visits ensure follow-up vision care

In February, the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile entered a new phase in its service to the community. It travelled to its first clinic destination, visiting Anderson Elementary in Minneapolis to provide follow-up eye exams and corrective lenses to students in need who were identified in earlier vision screening through the Early Youth Eyecare (E.Y.E.) Program.

By the end of this school year, the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile had performed eye exams for about 185 students. Most of these students also received glasses. "Observing a student's reaction once they try on their new glasses has been priceless," said LaRee Rowan, program manager.

In order to meet the needs of Minneapolis and St. Paul Public School students, it is estimated that the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile will provide eye exams four days a week during the upcoming school year.

Volunteers are needed to support these clinic visits as well as community outreach visits during the summer. If you are interested, please contact Sadie Barrett at 612-775-8964 or e-mail [eye@allina.com](mailto:eye@allina.com).

***Give today. Visit [allinahealth.org/investinsight](http://allinahealth.org/investinsight).***

Interested in learning more, getting involved or sharing your story about how Phillips Eye Institute has made a difference in your life?

**Call us at  
612-775-8758.**



## E.Y.E. Program wins national award

Phillips Eye Institute's Early Youth Eyecare (E.Y.E.) Community Initiative has been named a Program of Excellence through the Hospital Charitable Services Awards, a national program sponsored by Jackson Healthcare in Atlanta, Georgia.

The E.Y.E. Program provides vision screening to nearly 29,000 children each year in Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools. In collaboration with Phillips Eye Institute's Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile, it also provides comprehensive follow-up eye care, including vision exams and glasses, to children in need.

"Poor vision is one of the most easily correctable barriers to learning. Removing it as a barrier can help children perform better in school and in life," said Beverly Fritz, executive director of the Phillips Eye Institute Foundation.

This year's 10 Programs of Excellence were selected from a pool of 208 nominees. The winning programs were honored for their exceptional work in setting new standards for giving back to their communities in sustainable ways. Each received a \$10,000 gift to be invested in the growth of their program.

## ABOUT PHILLIPS EYE INSTITUTE

Phillips Eye Institute, part of Allina Health, is the third largest eye specialty hospital (in patient volume) in the United States. Dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases and disorders, Phillips Eye Institute's 70 ophthalmologists offer an extensive array of specialty services from diagnostic tests and low vision evaluations to laser eye treatments and specialized eye surgery.

The Phillips Eye Institute Foundation plays a vital role in improving the community's eye health and vision care through the Early Youth Eyecare (E.Y.E.) Community Initiative, the Kirby Puckett Eye Mobile, the Irving and Janet Shapiro Innovative Technology Fund and Transportation Program funding.

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## MISSION

To further Phillip Eye Institute's commitment to eye care excellence, education, research and community involvement while honoring the legacy of Mount Sinai Hospital.

Beverly Fritz, Executive Director  
Phillips Eye Institute Foundation  
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## SAVE THE DATE



## THE URBAN COCKTAIL PARTY BENEFITING

Phillips Eye Institute Foundation



 **THE  
URBAN**  
COCKTAIL PARTY

**Saturday, Nov. 7  
6 – 10:30 p.m.**

Minneapolis Event Center  
[allinahealth.org/urbancocktailparty](http://allinahealth.org/urbancocktailparty)

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