

If We Could Only See Through the Eyes of a Child

I LOVE MY JOB!! YOU DON'T HEAR TOO MANY PEOPLE SAY THAT THESE DAYS, DO YOU? MY NAME IS TERESA SCHACHTEL, AND AS A PEDIATRIC VISION SCREENER FOR CHEMPI IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA, I AM TRULY ABLE TO SAY THOSE WORDS. EVERY DAY I WORK WITH PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN CHECKING THEIR VISION TO MAKE SURE THAT THEIR EYES ARE HEALTHY. TO KNOW THAT I AM HELPING A CHILD IS THE BEST FEELING IN THE WORLD!



IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 1 IN ABOUT 20 CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 3 AND 5 HAS SOME SORT OF VISION PROBLEM. THE ELKS PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM SCREENS BETWEEN 45,000 TO 50,000 CHILDREN EACH YEAR. IT IS THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM TO SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN AT RISK, AND IT IS WITH THANKS TO THIS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PROGRAM THAT THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN HAVE BEEN SAVED FROM PERMANENT EYE DAMAGE OVER THE YEARS. THROUGH CHEMPI'S VISION SCREENING PROGRAM, VISUAL ISSUES SUCH AS: ASTIGMATISM, HYPEROPIA, MYOPIA, AMBLYOPIA (LAZY EYE), STRABISMUS, AND MANY MORE VISION PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN DETECTED. IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND THESE ISSUES EARLY IN LIFE SO THAT HELP CAN BE ADMINISTERED. SOME OF THE PROBLEMS CAN EVEN BE CORRECTABLE IF TREATED PROPERLY BY AN EYE DOCTOR.

WITH SCREENINGS HELD IN PRESCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS, ELKS LODGES AND HEALTH FAIRS, THE PROGRAM STRESSES EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE EYE DISORDERS. IN ADDITION, THE ELKS CERTIFIED PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENER'S GUIDE FAMILIES TOWARD FINDING APPROPRIATE MEDICAL HELP, AS WELL AS SECURING ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WHEN NEEDED.

FOR A CHILD WHO CAN'T SEE CLEARLY, LEARNING IN THE WORLD CAN BECOME A FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE. WITH A CLEAR VISION TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN, THE ELKS PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE TO HELP CHILDREN ENJOY LIFE'S MANY REWARDS, SUCH AS SEEING A SMILE ON A GRANDPARENT'S FACE OR A RAINBOW IN ALL ITS COLOR.

CALIFORNIA-HAWAII ELKS MAJOR PROJECT, INC.

THE GENEROUS DONATIONS OF OUR LODGE MEMBERS, GO TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS SUCH AS TERESA SCHACHTEL, A PEDIATRIC VISION SCREENER IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA. OUR DICTIONARY COMMITTEE, WHILE DELIVERING DICTIONARIES TO A LOCAL SCHOOL, WERE ABLE TO MEET TERESA AND SPEAK WITH HER. SHE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SUBMIT THE ARTICLE ON THE LEFT.

JUST TO REFRESH EVERYONE'S MEMORY, THE CALIFORNIA-HAWAII MAJOR PROJECT PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES TO AREA CHILDREN. SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPY, PHYSICAL THERAPY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM. THERAPISTS, SUCH AS TERESA, PROVIDE IN-HOME SERVICES TO CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO 21 WHO ARE NOT OTHERWISE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES THROUGH THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OR OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES OR FOR WHOM A HOME PROGRAM IS NECESSARY. FOCUS IS ON EARLY INTERVENTION FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE.

SERVICES ARE FREE OF CHARGE TO THE FAMILIES AND ARE FUNDED TOTALLY THROUGH DONATIONS FROM THE ELKS LODGES IN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII. VISION SCREENINGS ARE HELD THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA IN VARIOUS PRESCHOOL OR DAYCARE CENTERS OR IN OPEN COMMUNITY SCREENINGS.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY - THROUGH INDIVIDUAL HOME INSTRUCTION, THE GOAL FOR ALL CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM IS TO BECOME AS INDEPENDENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT AS THEY CAN. OUR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, WORKING WITH THE PARENTS, TEACH OUR CHILDREN THE BASICS FROM FEEDING AND DRESSING SKILLS TO DEALING WITH PROBLEMS IN SENSORY INTEGRATION.

PHYSICAL THERAPY - THE ELKS PHYSICAL THERAPISTS EVALUATE AND TREAT CHILDREN WITH A WIDE RANGE OF DISABILITIES AS THEY TRAVEL FROM HOME TO HOME. THEIR FOCUS IS TO HELP THESE CHILDREN LEARN OR IMPROVE IMPORTANT MOTOR SKILLS BY EDUCATING OR RE-EDUCATING MUSCLES AND INCREASE STRENGTH, ENDURANCE AND COORDINATION. PARENT INVOLVEMENT HELPS INCREASE THE RATE OF SUCCESS.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPY - THE GIFT OF COMMUNICATION, THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE - WITH THANKS TO THE ELKS. OUR HIGHLY TRAINED ELKS MAJOR PROJECT SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS CAN DIAGNOSE A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION DISORDERS AND COORDINATE A HOME PROGRAM OF THERAPY WITH THE PARENT. MANY SPEECH-LANGUAGE PROBLEMS ARE ADDRESSED BY THE STAFF, INCLUDING SWALLOWING OR FEEDING DIFFICULTIES.

PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING - THE ELKS PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM SCREENS OVER 50,000 CHILDREN PER YEAR. IT IS THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM TO SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN AT RISK FOR AMBLYOPIA ("LAZY EYE") AND OTHER VISION PROBLEMS. IT IS WITH THANKS TO THIS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PROGRAM THAT THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN HAVE BEEN SAVED FROM PERMANENT EYE DAMAGE OVER THE YEARS.

