

Clear Vision Is A Human Right

OneSight and Walking Shield Provide 1,500 Eye Exams to Students and Community Members

TWO RIVERS TRIBUNE

A sixth grade boy was nearly legally blind when the OneSight program visited his school several years ago. After going through various steps of the complete vision exam provided by OneSight, he received his new glasses.

While looking at the white board in his classroom he pushed the new glasses above his nose and said, "blind." Then pushed them back on and said, "clear." He repeated the motion several times, "blind, clear. Blind, clear. Blind, clear."

The boy looked out the window of his classroom in awe and the optometrist asked him to walk outside with him to get a better look.

"Wow! I never realized how beautiful the world is," the boy said.

Impaired vision can severely inhibit a child's ability to learn in school. Needing glasses, and not

having them, can cause eyestrain resulting in headaches, inability to focus, double vision, higher risk of accidents and injuries and other symptoms which can make it even more difficult to see.

"Sometimes the class clown is goofing off and not paying attention because they have bad eyesight," John Castillo, the executive director of Walking Shield Inc. said.

Walking Shield and the OneSight Program have teamed up to bring vision services to Indian Reservations throughout the Nation since 1996. They are in Hoopa this week and plan to provide more than 1,500 eye exams and nearly as many pairs of glasses to children and adults in the community.

Castillo said Walking Shield, the Klamath-Trinity Unified School District and Kima:w Medical Center have collaborated to provide the logistical support to bring the clinic to Hoopa every three years for the past nine years.

"On average 71 percent of students and 95 percent of adults who use the service need glasses," Castillo said. "Some people break or misplace their glasses and don't have insurance or access to optometry care. This program really helps them out."

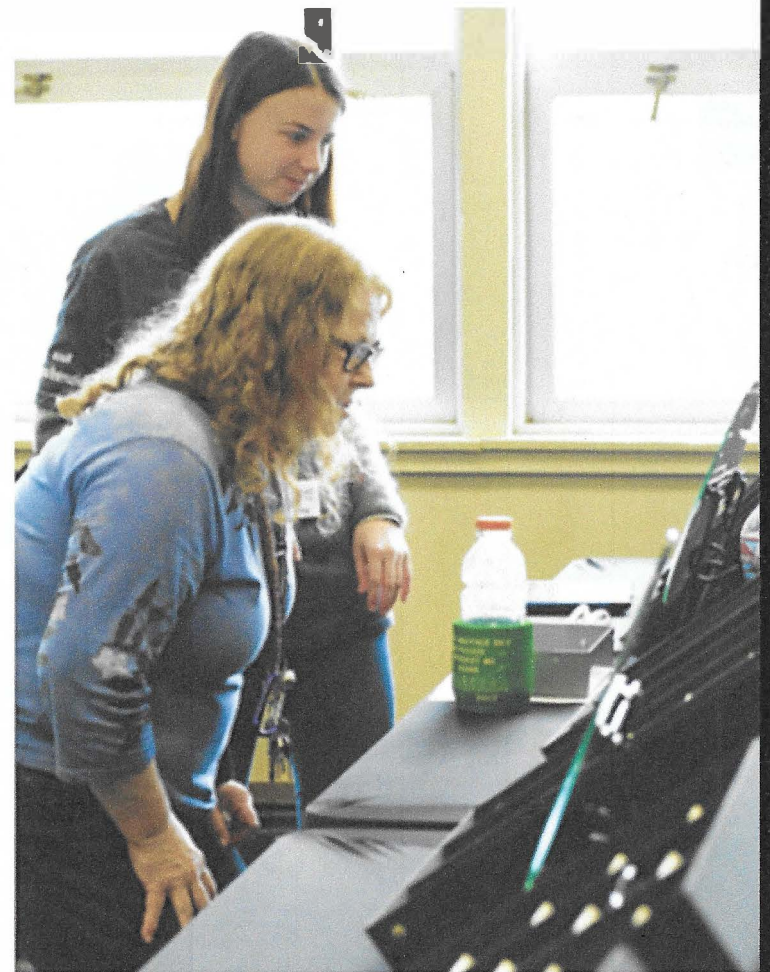
Although the clinic is set up at Hoopa Valley High School, it is accessible by all students within the district. Students who attend outly-

ing schools within the district will be provided transportation to the clinic throughout the week. The clinic is also available to pre-school aged children who will be in kindergarten next school year.

On Monday, one adult patient, "Roxanne", was overjoyed as she selected a set of frames for her new glasses. She said her lack of insurance and money prevented her from getting glasses sooner. All of the exams and glasses are free of charge to the patient. Each clinic event can cost between \$240,000-\$400,000.

OneSight's Doctors, technicians and specialists come together from all over the world. During this clinic, there are people from the U.S., Italy, Spain and England who walk patients through check-in, exams, eye dilation, an ophthalmologic exam, and, if needed, the selection of frames. The prescription is then taken to another room where the lenses are cut to fit the frames selected. Patients usually receive their new glasses within two-to-three days.

Sponsored by the Luxottica Group Foundation, the OneSight Program is based on the premise that clear vision is a basic human right. To date, OneSight projects coordinated by Walking Shield have provided more than 35,000 eye exams, distributed more than 27,000 pairs of glasses and provided services valued at more than \$14 million. ■



Because of health insurance barriers, Roxanne waited several years for an opportunity to see clearly again. The OneSight program and Walking Shield Inc. made it possible for her to get a complete vision exam on Monday, April 9. She will have a new pair of glasses by the end of the week./Photo by Allie Hostler, Two Rivers Tribune.