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Saving sight goal of Frostburg Lions

FOR THE FROSTBURG EXPRESS

FROSTBURG — Members of the Frostburg Lions Club have completed nearly 100 vision screenings of young children in Frostburg over the past three months. The vision screenings look for correctable visual problems in young children.

"We have updated and upgraded our equipment," said Lion Edge Deuel, vision screening coordinator. "Our new device uses the latest technology."

The device, a Welsh-Allyn Vision Screener, was purchased in conjunction with the Lonaconing Lions Club. Cost for the new unit was \$3,000.

"If we find one child with a correctable visual problem," notes Deuel, "this device will have paid for itself."

Frostburg and Lonaconing Lions report they have detected visual problems in eight children thus far. Parents are advised of the detected problem and encouraged to seek further professional evaluation.

One child who was screened was taken to an eye professional and received glasses. "Mom, you're not blurry anymore," was the child's first response in the doctor's office.

Lions indicate that the vision screening program is not a substitute for a regular visit to an eye care professional, but rather an indicator that a problem exists and need to be looked at.

The Welsh-Allyn Screener uses the latest infra-red technology, coupled with microchip processing. The eye is scanned, and the results printed out immediately for the parent. The screening is noninvasive, and causes no discomfort for the child.

In the past actual photos were taken of a child's eyes, and sent away to be analyzed, sometimes taking several



From the left: Frostburg Lions Tina Gormley, Cindy Powers, and Edge Deuel screen the vision of a pre-schooler.

months for results to be verified and returned. Now a typical screening, with results in hand, takes about 90 seconds to complete.

Lions receive extensive detailed training in the use of the device and reading the data output. Preset charts and graphs are used to decipher the numeric codes printed out by the Welsh-Allyn. The parents receive the actual print-out to take to their eye care profession for review if a problem has been detected.

Lions want to make sure that every child in the community has the opportunity for vision screening.

"Ultimately, it is up to the parents," Deuel said. "There are some who just will not partake of this program." Lions estimate that they screen less than 50 percent of the available children each year.

Frostburg and Lonaconing Lions will be holding several vision screenings in the future for children who do not use day care, or pre-school programs.

Vision Screening is always provided free of charges.

"This is another way Lions serve our community," said Susan Munck, membership chair for the group.

Not only is the vision screening a valuable asset to the community, but Lions have a lot of fun with the youngsters. "It is a very rewarding experience," Munck said.

Vision screenings are just one facet of the many activities Frostburg Lions participate in. Two other examples of service projects the Frostburg group conducts are "Coats for Kids" in the fall, and "Hugs" (stuffed animals) for children in distress.

"We are looking for new members in the Frostburg area," said Munck. "We want to expand the many projects we do, and add new ones."

New members to the group will add a variety of new ideas, projects and programs to help the Frostburg community. Lions are continually seeking new ways to serve the area. Frostburg Lions philosophy is to "do what you can, when you can, and how you can." This "team" approach has proven successful for the group.

"You don't need special skills, or occupations to be a Lion," Munck said. "We're just everyday folks, who want to do something for our town."

Anyone interested in participating in the Lions vision screening program, or membership in the Frostburg Lions Club, should contact the group at (301) 687-0212.