

# Seeing Change: DHC Discusses KY Lions Eye Programs with Foundation Director Lindy Lamkin and Kidsight Coordinator Karen Hayse

by Aaron Burch

Reading an article about eyesight is a luxury not everyone can enjoy. Vision is a great privilege, but that's easy to forget if it's working well.

Since 1954, the Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation (KLEF) has reminded Kentuckians from Paducah to Pikeville about how essential vision is to their greater quality of life. A staff of just three (alongside a small army of volunteers and partner organizations) provide vision services of all kinds: education, detection, prevention, treatment, and empowerment.

Throughout this article, we'll detail many of the programs available through KLEF and explain how their statewide partnerships have benefitted residents from six months old to 100 years young.



Let's begin with the youngest demographic. Developed in 2003, KLEF's **KidSight Program** conducts free vision screenings for children between six months and six years of age. Since the program began, more than 213,000 children have been screened. "We're volunteer based, so that's a huge number of children who received a free vision screening," said Karen Hayse, KidSight Coordinator.

Karen explained how a grant from Lions Club International and a donation from the Louisville Downtown Lions Club allowed KLEF to purchase 25 digital screening cameras and distribute them across the state to HeadStart offices. HeadStart is a federal program that promotes school readiness for children from low-income families. Their staff was trained by KLEF to ensure they could successfully provide screenings to children from across the state.

"The big thing with the KidSight program is early detection," Karen said. "The three seconds it takes to point and click a screening camera might be life changing for a child. If we go to a daycare, and one screening leads to a treatment, that alone makes our efforts worth it."

A few years ago, KLEF began collaborating with physical clinics in Jefferson County Public Schools to reach any student that is not in compliance with physical requirement. That's how KLEF began partnering with the Doctors for Healthy Communities (DHC).

In the last several years, KY Lions Eye has partnered with DHC volunteers and JCPS staff to provide hundreds of complete school and sports physicals in elementary, middle and high schools. KLEF staff were an integral part of these visits. "These students weren't going to the doctor or a clinic for their annual check-ups, so DHC brought the clinics to them," said Karen.

Some of the JCPS sites have as many as 400 children not in compliance with the physical requirement. These clinics made a huge

difference in the lives of grade school kids, and they're scheduled to continue in the spring 2022 semester. KLEF is grateful for this partnership that enables them to provide free vision screenings to these children as well.

Although KLEF has reached many underserved communities, there are still opportunities for greater coverage. "Organizations can request a screening on [our website](#)," explained Executive Director Lindy Lamkin. "We're trying to go everywhere we can. If you know someone who manages an in-home childcare center that has seven children, those seven kids deserve a vision screening, too."

And Lindy DOES mean everywhere. KLEF's **Vision Van Program** travels throughout the Commonwealth to provide screenings for individuals at community events, health fairs, and anywhere else families may be. "The Vision Van Program provides visual acuity, field vision and glaucoma tests at events of all types. We've been to pancake breakfasts, downhome days, and we're set up all 11 days of the Kentucky State Fair," Karen said.



KLEF's assistance doesn't end with screenings. For Kentucky residents with limited or no insurance, the **Patron Fund Program** helps individuals obtain medically necessary eye surgeries such as cataract surgeries and corneal transplants. Each patient who meets eligibility requirements can apply for assistance by completing the application that is available on [KLEF's website](#). Each application is reviewed by a committee and patients are notified of the result of their reviewed application for

assistance.

"We've provided help to 200 Kentuckians in the last five years through this program, and these are life changing operations," Lindy said. "One person from rural Kentucky had a very rare cancer of the eye. The individual couldn't be treated in Louisville, so we contacted the Cleveland Clinic to complete the procedure. The patient wasn't able to drive, so our team secured Greyhound tickets and a hotel for them to rest. The individual had a successful surgery and now has an improved quality of life. That's our goal, to help people every step of the way."

Similarly, the KLEF's **Holloran Program** assists low income legally blind individuals in Louisville and surrounding counties. Available funds can be used on low vision equipment, transportation assistance, medical expenses and more. Full details and the application to apply are available on [KLEF's website](#).

There are several ways you can get involved and support the great work of the Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation. On Sunday, March 20, 2022, they will be hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Mr. and Miss Kentucky Basketball Award Ceremony in Lexington. This event recognizes current and former high school basketball players and raises valuable funding for the continued programs of the Foundation. Tickets and donations are available via [www.kylionseye.org/basketball](http://www.kylionseye.org/basketball). There's also an annual Golf Scramble held each fall which is supported by Doctors for Healthy Communities as well.



"We want to connect with as many people as possible," Lindy explained. "Subscribe to our email newsletter, follow us on Facebook. If you'd like to get involved, we're always looking for volunteers. Even the smallest contribution of your time, talent, or treasures can make a life changing difference for others."



Doctors for Healthy Communities | 2107 Twin Hill Road, Louisville KY 40207  
dhcus.org@gmail.com | www.dhcus.org

STAY CONNECTED

