



Advances in eye care. Connections to experts.

FEBRUARY 6 – 8

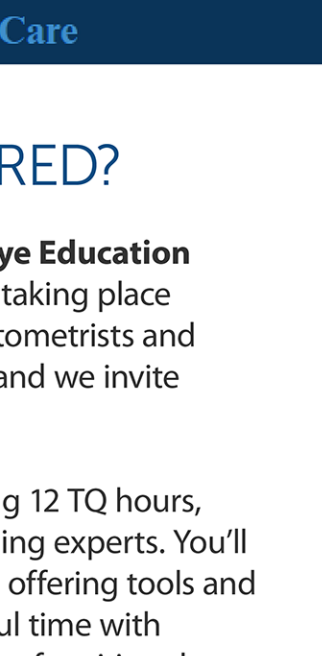
2026

EYE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

THE 37TH ANNUAL CONTINUING EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

Clearer Together: Building Bridges in Eye Care



HAVE YOU REGISTERED?

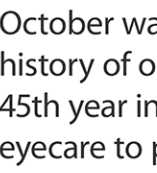
Registration is filling quickly for the **37th Annual Eye Education Foundation Continuing Education Symposium**, taking place **February 6–8, 2026, in Dothan**. More than 75 optometrists and a dozen vendors have already secured their spots, and we invite you to join us.

This year's symposium offers 20 CE credits, including 12 TQ hours, with engaging, practical content presented by leading experts. You'll also have the opportunity to connect with vendors offering tools and solutions to support your practice, enjoy meaningful time with colleagues, and participate in drawings for a variety of exciting door prizes throughout the weekend.

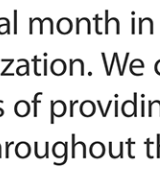
Most Eye Center South Ophthalmologists will be in attendance, and we truly value the opportunity to learn alongside you and strengthen our partnership.

We look forward to seeing you in Dothan—thank you for your continued trust and collaboration.

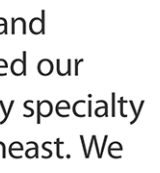
CLICK TO REGISTER



CARLO PELINO, OD
THE EYE INSTITUTE, PHILADELPHIA, PA



JULIE RODMAN, OD
NSU FLORIDA, FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

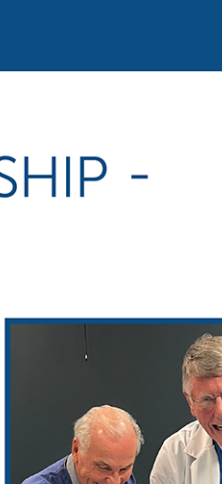


MARIUS HEERSINK, MD
EYE CENTER SOUTH, DOTHAN, AL



ALICE STERLING, OD
FLORIDA EYE CLINIC, ORLANDO, FL

REGISTER NOW

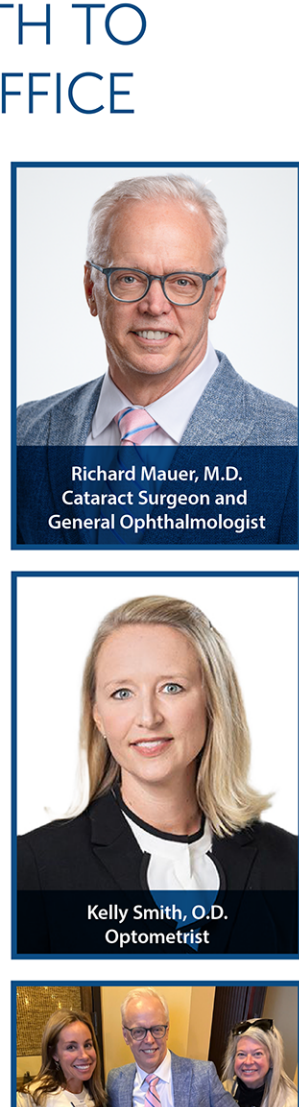


Follow us on Facebook @EyeEducationFoundation for updates throughout the year.

CLINIC NEWS

45 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP - TOGETHER

October was a special month in the life and history of our organization. We celebrated our 45th year in business of providing quality specialty eyecare to people throughout the Southeast. We are deeply grateful to all of you, many of whom we worked with all these years. Your trust in our team is paramount to our success. Thank you for the quality primary vision care you provide your patients and thank you for recommending them to us for specialty surgical care. Together, we have made a tremendous impact on elevating quality eyecare to members of our communities. We are excited to continue working together to broaden our impact in the years to come.

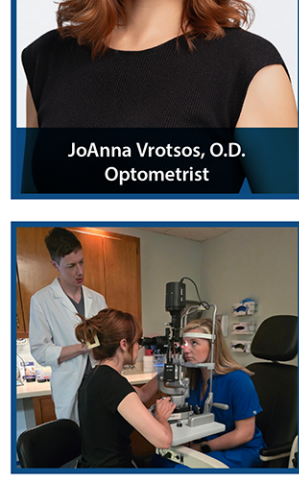


JOIN US IN WELCOMING DR. MAUER & DR. SMITH TO NEW PANAMA CITY OFFICE

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Richard Mauer and Dr. Kelly Smith to our Panama City location, our newest and second office in the area where they will both practice exclusively. Dr. Mauer offers expertise in comprehensive ophthalmology, cataract and refractive surgery, minimally invasive glaucoma surgery, and oculoplastics, further expanding the specialty care available to your patients in the region. Dr. Kelly Smith will provide primary eye care services to patients that were already established at Advanced Eye Care but also welcomes new patients, including children.

We would also like to thank our Panama City optometric colleagues who joined us for dinner at Firefly on December 9 to help welcome Dr. Mauer—your time and partnership are greatly appreciated.

If you would like to schedule a personal visit with Dr. Mauer or Dr. Smith, please contact Kim Smith at 334-798-5714. To learn more about Dr. Mauer, [click here](#) to view his profile. To learn more about Dr. Smith, [click here](#) to view her profile.



Richard Mauer, M.D.
Cataract Surgeon and General Ophthalmologist



Kelly Smith, O.D.
Optometrist



WELCOME DR. VROTSOS TO MONTGOMERY

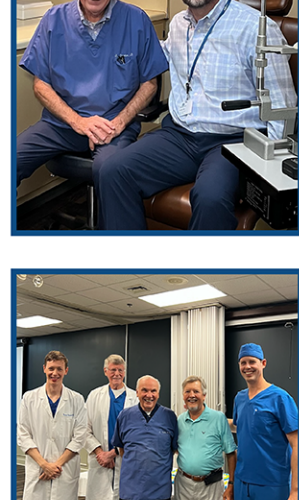
Dr. JoAnna Vrotsos joined Dr. Owens in our Montgomery practice in September. Dr. Vrotsos is a skilled and passionate optometrist with diverse experience across community health, private practice, and corporate settings.

Dr. Vrotsos values a collaborative, team-based approach to patient care and is excited to offer her expertise to the Montgomery community.

She will be working closely alongside Dr. Owens to extend quality vision care to our medical management patients. [Click here](#) to learn more about Dr. Vrotsos.



JoAnna Vrotsos, O.D.
Optometrist

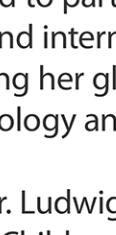
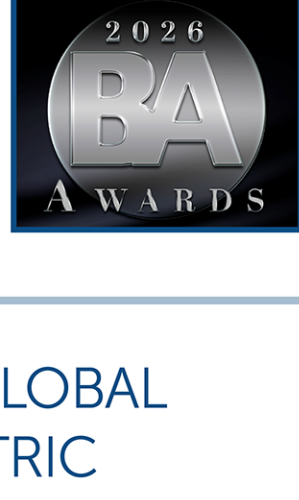
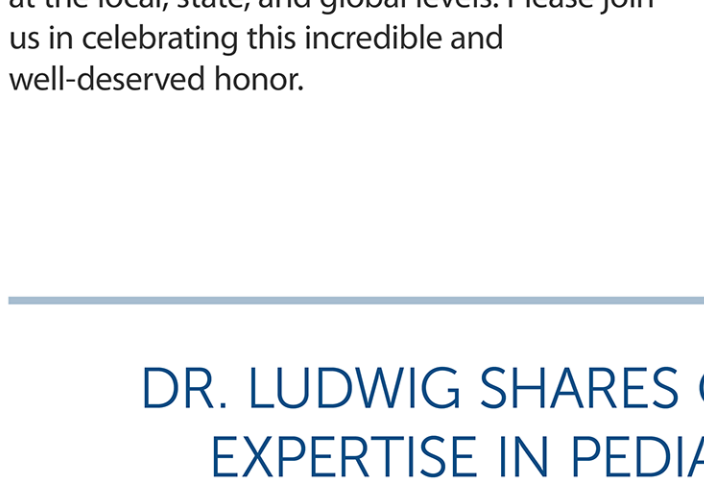


WELCOME DR. CAM SCHROEDER TO DOTHAN

We're excited to welcome Dr. Cameron Schroeder, new Optometrist at Eye Center South in Dothan. Dr. Schroeder will be working alongside our ophthalmologists to extend quality vision care to our medical eye patients. He will be heavily assisting Dr. Sen in our retina suite following Dr. Fortin's retirement. Learn more about Dr. Schroeder by [clicking here](#).



Cameron Schroeder, O.D.
Optometrist



GIFT OF SIGHT UPDATE

Thank you for another successful year supporting our Gift of Sight program. This complimentary community program provides free cataract surgery to people in need without medical insurance. Dr. Sebastian Heersink and Dr. Marius Heersink performed the surgeries to patients who applied and qualified for this program. We appreciate your continued partnership in support of this community service.

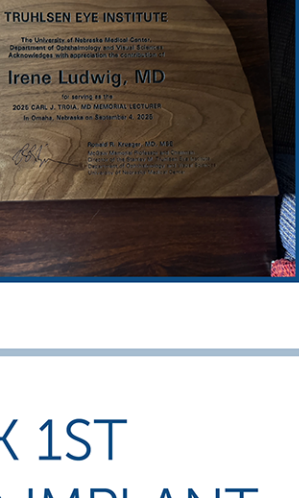
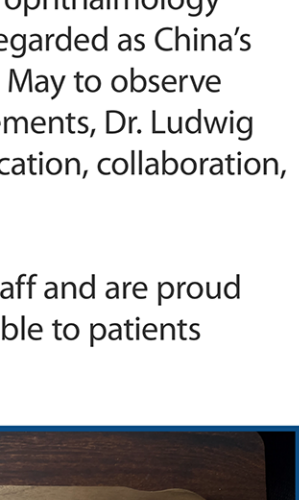
Applications are open throughout the year on our website at <https://www.eyecentersouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Gift-of-Sight-Application-2022.pdf>. All applications are processed each June/July with surgeries taking place in August.

PHYSICIAN & STAFF NEWS

DR. FORTIN RETIRED AFTER 45 YEARS OF SERVICE

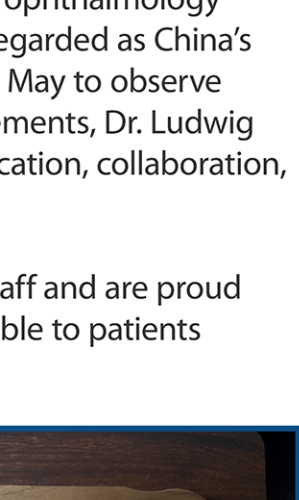
Our entire Dothan clinic gathered in November to honor co-founder Dr. John Fortin's retirement after 45 years of dedicated service to our organization. Dr. Fortin made history as the first retina specialist in the Wiregrass area, dedicating his career to restoring sight and improving lives across our community. His compassion, expertise, and commitment to excellence have left an indelible mark on both his patients and colleagues. Please join us in wishing Dr. Fortin a joyful and well-deserved retirement.

Dr. Harsha Sen will be our exclusive Retina Specialist in Dothan. If you need any assistance regarding referrals or transition of care, please call 334-793-2211 and press "4" for expedited service.

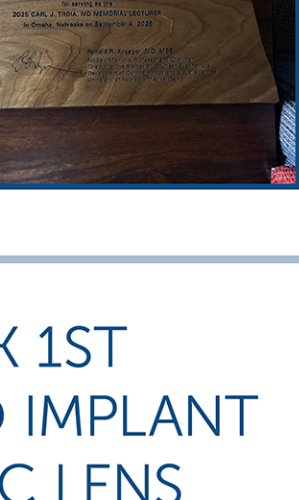


DR. MARNIX HEERSINK TO RECEIVE A LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

It is with great pride that we announce that our founder, Dr. Marnix Heersink, has been named a Lifetime Achievement Award recipient from Business Alabama, to be awarded on January 30. Dr. Heersink will be recognized alongside Raymond Harbert, E. Grace Pilot, and Bill Roark. His remarkable contributions to education through endowments and scholarships, expanded access to quality healthcare, and business innovation have made a lasting impact at the local, state, and global levels. Please join us in celebrating this incredible and well-deserved honor.



Marnix E. Heersink, M.D.
Cataract Surgeon & General Ophthalmology



DR. LUDWIG SHARES GLOBAL EXPERTISE IN PEDIATRIC OPHTHALMOLOGY AND STRABISMUS

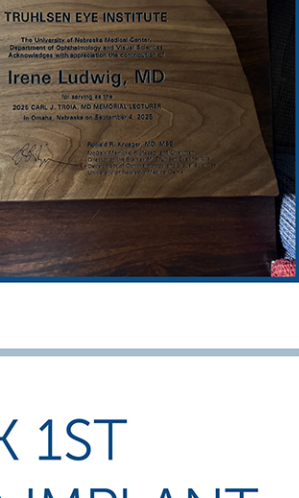
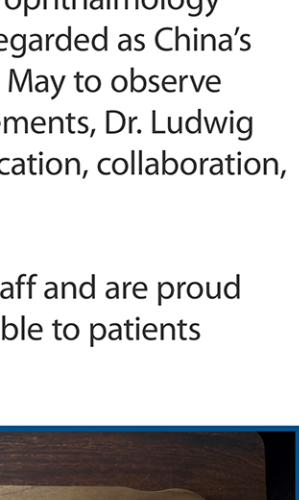
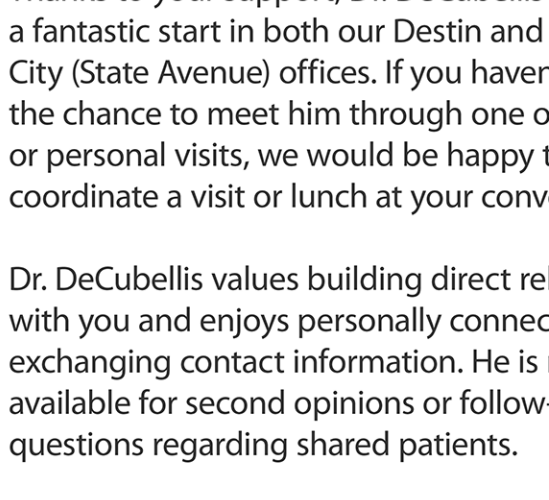
In 2025, renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Ludwig was invited to participate in a series of prestigious national and international academic events, highlighting her global leadership in pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus surgery.

In April, Dr. Ludwig served as a visiting Professor at Boston Children's Hospital. During her visit, she delivered lectures and provided expert intraoperative observation and consultation during complex strabismus surgeries performed by Dr. Joe Griffith, fostering collaborative exchange at one of the nation's leading pediatric institutions.

In September, Dr. Ludwig delivered the Carl J. Troia Distinguished Lecture at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. Her featured lecture, "New Strabismus Surgical Procedures Incorporating Recent Advances in Anatomy and Function of the Extraocular Muscles (Pulley Surgery)," was followed by a distinguished banquet. The next morning, she presented three additional lectures to the department—"Esotropia, Exotropia, and The American Health Care Crisis: Follow the Money"—and later participated in a clinic in which Dr. Rhychowski presented challenging cases for her expert input.

Later in September, Dr. Ludwig delivered the keynote address at the International Summit on Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus—Shanghai, held at Fudan University Eye and Ear Hospital. She also led an interactive case-review session, offering commentary on complex cases presented by international colleagues. The summit was preceded by a book signing for the Chinese translation of her strabismus surgery textbook, completed by the Fudan pediatric ophthalmology team. The department chair, Dr. Chen Zhao, widely regarded as China's leading strabismus surgeon, is planning a U.S. visit in May to observe Dr. Ludwig's surgical practice. Through these engagements, Dr. Ludwig continues to shape the field worldwide through education, collaboration, and surgical innovation.

We are grateful to have Dr. Ludwig on our medical staff and are proud that her internationally recognized expertise is available to patients referred by you, our local optometric community.



BUILDING STRONG CONNECTIONS: DR. DECUBELLIS IN DESTIN AND PANAMA CITY

Thanks to your support, Dr. DeCubellis has had a fantastic start in both our Destin and Panama City (State Avenue) offices. If you haven't yet had the chance to meet him through one of our events or personal visits, we would be happy to coordinate a visit or lunch at your convenience.

Dr. DeCubellis values building direct relationships with you and enjoys personally connecting and exchanging contact information. He is readily available for second opinions or follow-up questions regarding shared patients.

To schedule a visit, please contact Kim Smith at 334-798-5714.

You can also [click here](#) to watch a recent interview Dr. DeCubellis conducted with WMBB Channel 13 in Panama City.



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