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## **CHICAGO MAN SHARES HIS PLIGHT WITH VISION LOSS AND URGES COMMUNITY TO ATTEND FREE EYE SCREENING ON JUNE 11**

CHICAGO--The American Academy of Ophthalmology (Academy) and the Illinois Association of Ophthalmology (IAO) will bring a new screening initiative, **EyeSmart® EyeCheck**, a program created to combat undetected eye disease and visual impairment among at-risk populations in the United States, to Chicago. The free vision screening will take place on Saturday, June 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the New Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church at 4301 W. Washington Blvd. in Chicago.

In light of the upcoming screening, Executive Assistant to the pastor of New Mount Pilgrim Church and Chicago resident, Thaddeus Hall, wanted to share his experience of his own vision loss and urge members of the community to attend the screening event.

Thaddeus has been living with diabetes for over 20 years, but like many patients had done little to manage his condition, until problems began to arise with his vision.

"I was in denial about my diabetes for years and failed to be in compliance with taking my insulin, other prescribed medications, and not having the recommended annual dilated eye exam," said Hall.

Four months ago, Hall, 48, was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy, an eye disease affecting more than 4.4 million Americans age 40 and older. Like almost a third of Americans living with diabetes, Hall did not know he had the disease until vision loss began to set in.

Over the last three years Hall noticed his vision began to deteriorate. He recalls having family and friends read small print to him and help him identify colors when coordinating his clothes. He also found himself using a magnifying glass behind closed doors and had problems reading the words on the television. "One day I woke up and it took longer than usual for my vision to become focused, at this time I told myself I had to get my eyes checked," added Hall.

He visited his ophthalmologist (an Eye M.D.) who quickly discovered that Hall's diabetes had taken a severe toll on his vision. "The ophthalmologist told me that over the years, scar tissue had developed and that I was lucky that I came in because my retina had detached, which would require immediate surgery." Today Hall has regained some of his sight but still has very limited vision in his right eye. He prays his vision will be restored after his next surgery.

Most eye diseases like Hall's diabetic retinopathy are treatable if detected early. In fact, up to 80 percent of all blindness can be prevented by early treatment.

"Had I gotten checked earlier, I could have avoided all of these problems entirely," said Hall. "I encourage people to be proactive and not reactive. Get your eyes checked before it's too late."

Chicago residents can take control of their vision by getting a free eye screening on June 11. The free vision screening will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the New Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church at 4301 W. Washington Blvd. in Chicago. The event is sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Illinois Association of Ophthalmology. More information on EyeSmart EyeCheck can be found at [www.geteyesmart.org](http://www.geteyesmart.org).

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### **About the Illinois Association of Ophthalmology**

The Illinois Association of Ophthalmology represents the nearly 700 ophthalmologists who practice throughout the state. A primary mission is to engage in worthwhile public service projects and professional education programs, as well as advocating for ophthalmologists and their patients within state government and the private sector. The IAO's website is: [www.IEyeMD.org](http://www.IEyeMD.org)

### **About the American Academy of Ophthalmology**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.s—with more than 29,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three “O’s” – opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all: eye diseases and injuries, and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D. in your area, visit the Academy's Web site at [www.aaopt.org](http://www.aaopt.org).

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