

# Making a Difference Matters

## Pandemic Escalates ‘Social Responsibility’ for Companies, ECPs and Brands



**C**orporate Social Responsibility, also known as CSR, has been a part of our business landscape for quite some time now. But like any good social purpose movement, CSR continues to grow, change and at times, even reinvent itself as current events and societal changes take hold.

The term CSR is all about businesses and, in turn, employees, being good “corporate citi-

zens.” Supporting a common social good allows companies to contribute to their community, locally or elsewhere in the world, connect with customers, establish positive employee participation, and ultimately expand awareness of their brand.

2020 started out on a positive note—a new decade, a fresh beginning, the “year of optical”—what many of us hoped would be a time

of innovation, ingenuity and progress. And then the pandemic arrived, first in Asia, then Europe and the U.S. And the rules, for just about everything, changed, almost overnight. The world experienced a dramatic and seismic shift, and corporate America was no exception. The rules and definitions of “good corporate citizenship” changed and the business world pivoted.

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Prowly, a company that specializes in media analytics and PR workflows, and has issued studies before and after the pandemic, describes CSR this way: "The value of being a good corporate citizen goes beyond the pride and satisfaction of providing simple altruistic support for worthy goals. Strong and consistent CSR policies have become a cornerstone of the identity of many brands with customer bases that strongly identify with causes championed by businesses, from ethical sourcing to contractor working conditions to carbon footprints and a thousand other issues in between."

*Vision Monday* has dedicated its December issue to the rise of "social purpose" for several years, from support for vision care access, sustainability and the environment, give-back programs to a range of non-profits, local and global. This year we'd planned to do that again but in light of this momentous year, we adjusted our theme to include new views of CSR as the wider umbrella under which many vision care providers, ECPs, retailers, brands and NGOs are adopting a more visible support of a range of issues as companies.

Here are some of the things we learned about CSR and the meaning of "social purpose" while researching this story.

As 2020 unfolded, NVI's CEO Reade Fahs summed up the philosophy of many optical companies when he told *VM*, "Undaunted by the many challenges of the pandemic, National Vision continued ahead with our philanthropic and social mission efforts. In fact, we broadened and expanded them."

Many other optical companies did the same. As the pandemic took hold in March, it became apparent that PPE was in short supply, and dozens of companies, including ClearVision, Modo, OptiSource, Rochester Optical, Safilo, SN Optical, Studio Optyx, Santinelli and Zeiss, along with large



vision plans, optical retailers and health insurers, stepped up to fill the void. As *VM* associate editor Gwendolyn Plummer wrote, "they did their part to help frontline workers everywhere by producing PPE, donating materials for PPE, or sourcing PPE themselves and making sure it ended up in the hands of those who needed it most."

As the months flew by, economic hardship became the "kitchen table" talk of the day for many households and optical responded with stepped up efforts to provide eyewear and eyecare for those in need. Despite the pandemic, ECPs donated time and helped the Essilor Vision Foundation in its own efforts to advance its mission of eliminating poor vision, through sight saving programs such as Kids Vision for Life and their Champions for Sight programs. OneSight, Restoring Vision and VisionSpring helped folks in the U.S. and internationally, while Prevent Blindness, the AOA's Optometric Foundation and Opticians Associations helped on state levels as did optometric students across the country.

Corporate social responsibility underwent a profound change as the needs of people across the country changed. Shifts in societal norms prompted optical companies to refocus some of their efforts to shine a light on and lend support

to emerging social issues.

Warby Parker, National Vision and MyEyeDr. partnered with Black Eyecare Perspective to raise awareness of the optometry opportunity among young Black students at HCBUs, the National Optometric Association raised its profile and The Vision Council undertook a Diversity & Inclusion study; Kenmark rolled out the #FindTheLight social campaign to get the conversation going on mental health issues; and Sight for Kids, J&J Vision's program, provided access to eye health education and services, including free exams and eyeglasses, to approximately 500,000 children. Environmental concerns (Modo's Eco, Costa, Eastman and others) escalated this year, too.

Please know these are just a few examples of the efforts being made across the optical industry in the name of being good corporate citizens, proof that making a difference matters. Remember to read **VM's A Greater Vision** and **VM's Coronavirus Briefing** stories on *VisionMonday.com* and follow our *VMAIL* news to learn more. Please keep us at *Vision Monday* and *VMAIL* in the loop and we'll share your practice, brand or company's message as we move into 2021.

—VM Edit Staff



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### Eyemart Express Says Compassion Is Key Element of its Culture

While many firms step up their social responsibility efforts during the holidays, Dallas-based Eyemart Express said it works to give back year-round by supporting a variety of nonprofit organizations. The optical retailer offers a convenient way to involve customers in its philanthropic efforts by donating a portion of its sales from key collections to nonprofits that support several causes—from childhood blindness and mental health to pet adoption and cancer research.

“At Eyemart Express, we improve lives while helping people see better,” chief executive officer Michael Bender noted. “We recognize the importance of helping others, which is why compassion is a key element of our corporate culture.”

Bender said the retailer has developed “strong partnerships with an array of nonprofit organiza-

tions” to further support their efforts, including Vitamin Angels, PeaceLove and Petfinder Foundation.

The partnership with Vitamin Angels (which works to protect the sight of children at risk of vitamin A deficiency blindness) ties into Eyemart Express’ line of Jonas Paul glasses for kids, and the partnership with PeaceLove supports the nonprofits’ efforts on behalf of the mental health community. A portion of every sale from this colorful collection of glasses cases and lens cloths goes to the nonprofit organization.

In its partnership with Petfinder Foundation, which works to prevent the euthanasia of adoptable pets by assisting animal shelters and rescue groups, patients can select pet-themed lens cloths, and \$1 from every purchase is donated directly to the foundation. ■



A portion of every sale from the colorful PeaceLove collection of glasses cases and lens cloths goes to the nonprofit PeaceLove organization that supports the mental health community.

### EVF Is Committed to Helping Children See Clearly

As Essilor Vision Foundation (EVF) continues to navigate life during the coronavirus pandemic, the foundation is grateful for the support of the optical industry that helps EVF advance its mission of eliminating poor vision. These partnerships enable EVF to serve the eye doctors, schools and non-profits that are working selflessly to meet the needs of their communities during this unprecedented time:

- **PPE Donations:** Essilor of America and EVF have donated nearly 100,000 pairs of protective safety glasses to hospitals, crisis responders, optometry schools and eyecare professionals providing emergency and urgent care services.

- **Kids Vision for Life:** EVF’s Kids Vision for Life program (KVFL) offers no-cost exams and glasses to local Title 1 schools. In accordance with safety guidelines, EVF has modified operations in an ef-

fort to protect teachers, nurses, school staff and students. EVF is currently working with schools and non-profit partners to determine future program needs and expectations for 2021.

- **Champions for Sight:** In 2020, EVF reached out to over 180,000 school staff about the Champions for Sight program that offers free educational materials about vision for students and parents. In November, EVF launched a partnership with jewelry company Kendra Scott to say thank you to school staff educating kids around the country.

- **Good Vision Starts with Good Doctors:** To support philanthropic eye doctors who are heroes in their communities, EVF is promoting the messaging that Good Vision Starts with Good Doctors. The messaging encourages eye doctors to be charitable in their community by enrolling in EVF’s OD programs —See Kids Soar and Changing Life through Lenses.



“EVF is moving swiftly to navigate the many changes that are the result of COVID-19,” said Becky Palm, president and executive director. “We greatly appreciate the industry’s continued support and hope that everyone stays healthy and safe.” ■

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### Sight for Kids Is One of J&J Vision's Signature Efforts

At Johnson & Johnson, the company said its corporate social responsibility efforts are guided by its three pillars of corporate responsibility: improving global health, improving local communities, and ensuring the sustainability of the planet. And J&J Vision focuses globally on two signature efforts that preserve and restore sight.

They are: the Himalayan Cataract Project and Sight for Kids. With the former, co-founders Sanduk Ruit MD, and American ophthalmologist, Geoff Tabin MD, have recognized the unmet eye health need in the Himalayas and made a vow in 1995 to eliminate preventable and treatable blindness. (Ruit was born in Nepal and educated in India.) Never in their lifetimes did they believe they would change the arc of global blindness in Nepal, but that is what they did, according to J&J.

The Himalayan Cataract Project and its extensive network of partners today work across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa to bring world-class eyecare

to the needlessly blind through quality care, clinical training and the establishment of first-rate ophthalmic infrastructures. As a result, over 739,000 people from 17 countries now see and live better.

With its effort on behalf of Sight for Kids, the company strives to address the situation of the 19 million children who are visually impaired. Sight for Kids has provided school-based eye health education and vision screening to more than 25 million kids around the world with Lions Clubs International Foundation and local partners.

Through Sight for Kids, J&J Vision has provided access to eye health education and services, including free exams and eyeglasses, to approximately 500,000 children. The company said that, working with local partners, it aspires to double the number of children helped through Sight for Kids by 2021.

In addition, Johnson & Johnson Vision is “committed to creating a healthier world” through its



global, proactive sustainability initiatives. Its focus is in three specific areas: climate, waste reduction and protection of natural resources.

“We have significantly reduced our carbon footprint over the past 10 years by prioritizing energy efficiency in our production technology and harnessing renewable energy with wind turbines and solar power in the U.S. and the United Kingdom,” the company noted. “By further reducing secondary packaging for our all of products, we have made significant headway in reducing the impact of shipping, distribution, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.” ■

### Kenmark Focuses on Sustainability and Mental Health

Kenmark Eyewear has taken a two-pronged approach to its corporate social responsibility this year, focusing on both the environment and mental health. In April, the company collaborated with the National Forest Foundation (NFF) on its 50 Million for Our Forests tree planting campaign, donating 5 percent of all its Paradigm sales from April 20-24 to the NFF. The NFF is planting one tree for each dollar it receives, up to \$50 million.

Of that partnership, vice president of marketing Marissa Cundiff said, “Sustainability is one of our main goals as a company moving forward and we are continually trying to research and do better for the environment across all facets of our business as we move into the future. We feel this is extremely important for ourselves and future gen-

erations to commit to always doing the best we can to continue to reduce our carbon footprint. The forests are beautiful, magnificent places and I'm both excited and proud our company has chosen to partner with the NFF to help restore them.”

Later in the year, the company released a new collection in its partnership with writer and influencer Gemma Styles. As part of the partnership, Styles and Kenmark rolled out the #FindTheLight social campaign. Teaming up with MQ Mental Health Research charity, Styles and Kenmark opened up social media conversation regarding mental health and “finding the light.” In addition, they released a special edition pair of Styles' Don't Stop sunglasses. 10 percent of proceeds from the glasses were donated to MQ Mental Health Research. ■



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### National Vision Continues to Support Improving Access, Addressing Social Causes

Giving back and expanding access to vision care have been part of the National Vision Inc (NVI) business philosophy for many years now. The company operates America's Best, Eyeglass World, certain Walmart Vision Centers, Vista Opticals in select Fred Meyer stores and Vista on military bases. In this particular year, NVI's CEO Reade Fahs told *VM*, "Undaunted by the many challenges of the pandemic, National Vision continued ahead with our philanthropic and social mission efforts. In fact, we broadened and expanded them."

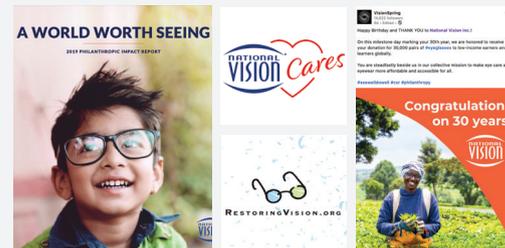
In August of this year, the company in fact issued its first ever Philanthropic Impact Report tracing its 2019 activities in a range of programs and initiatives. The entire report can be downloaded as a PDF here [https://www.nationalvision.com/media/1503/nvi\\_impactreport\\_2019\\_singlepages\\_small.pdf](https://www.nationalvision.com/media/1503/nvi_impactreport_2019_singlepages_small.pdf).

Among NVI's 2020 Philanthropic efforts, here are some highlights:

- In April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, National Vision donated 40,000 units of PPE to assist first responders and hospitals.
- Since March 2020, more than \$720,000 has been granted to National Vision associates and doctors through the National Vision Crisis Relief Fund (which was launched in 2019.) Of this, more than \$230,000 was donated by National Vision associ-

ates and doctors themselves.

- The company launched National Vision Cares, a program to provide each of the company's 1,200 stores with two pairs of glasses and two eye exams every month to give away as the store chooses—a combined total of 57,600 pairs of glasses and exams each year to give back to our communities.
- America's Best Contacts & Eyeglasses became the sole sponsor of the Summer Enrichment Program of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University, which works to increase the number of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) in the optometric profession (a \$300,000 through a five-year commitment).
- National Vision was one of the three lead sponsors of Black EyeCare Perspective's HBCU Impact project to promote Optometry on the campuses of HBCUs.
- Through the "Made Locally, Given Globally" program, the Eyeglass World in-store labs manufactures eyeglasses for those in need in developing countries. Since its inception in 2020, the program had produced more than 79,000 pairs of glasses and distributed more than 18,000 pairs to people in 25 countries around the world.
- In honor of National Vision's 30th anniversary, National Vision donated 30,000 eyeglasses to VisionSpring, a nonprofit social enterprise that strives to



improve social and economic development around the world by increasing access to affordable eyecare.

- National Vision continued to support the Clear Vision Collective in Bangladesh as one of its 10 founding organizations. Now in its second year, the Collective managed to screen over 58,000 people and provide glasses to 10,000 people despite the pandemic.
- This year, National Vision funded 17,000 pairs of glasses to RestoringVision in honor of the organization's milestone of having helped 17 million people. RestoringVision is the largest provider of new reading glasses to people living in impoverished communities around the world.
- Kevin Hassey became board chair of Restoring Vision this year and Reade Fahs continued on in his chairmanship of VisionSpring.
- Overall, National Vision's businesses have sponsored glasses philanthropically for a quarter of a million people in 2020. ■

### Costa's Commitment to the Planet

Costa has long been committed to sustainability—in fact, water-based sustainability efforts are so important to the company that it calls protecting the ocean "one of Costa's main brand values."

Last year at Vision Expo East, Costa launched a new initiative: its Kick Plastic Lens Recycling Program, which encourages ECPs to collect, recycle and repurpose plastic lenses, both clear and

sun. At Vision Expo West, Costa then expanded the program to allow optical labs to send both their plastic waste and dry plastic finishing to select Piedmont Plastics locations for recycling and repurposing. Prior to this, only two labs accepted optical discarded plastic in the continental U.S.

In 2019, Costa told *Vision Monday* that the Kick Plastic Lens Recycling Program "facilitated



the recycling and repurposing of over 2,200 pounds of discarded plastic lenses, with the number growing every day. This is in addition to over 22 tons (approximately 44,000 pounds) of plastic lenses processed from Costa's Daytona Beach labs." ■

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## Social Media Augments Message About ‘Social Purpose’

1. In conjunction with its partnership with Gemma Styles, Kenmark Eyewear collaborated with MQ Mental Health Research this year to donate a portion of sales from the limited edition “Find the Light” frames to the nonprofit. Image via kenmarkeyewear on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CHDZJdLBboj/>

2. This year, Marchon Eyewear became the first to partner with Eastman to produce and sell frames using Eastman Acetate Renew, a sustainable material. Image via marchoneyewear on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CGSijgsMt7u/>

3. Safilo Group also focused on sustainability this year, partnering with The Ocean Cleanup to create sunglasses out of plastic collected from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Image via safilogroup on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CGzoMmuFW8d/>

4. ECPs get involved with corporate social responsibility, too. For Thanksgiving, the team at Connecticut Vision chose a family to receive a Thanksgiving Day basket to make their holiday stress free. Image via connecticutvision on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CH8bjhwBLYX/>

5. The team at Children’s Clear Vision, located in Twin Falls, Idaho, is giving back this year through their 12 Gifts of Christmas, which will support small businesses and local community heroes. Image via childrensclearvision on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Clj4v8ehhFl/>



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## Dozens of Companies and ECPs Contributed to the PPE Effort

**W**hen COVID-19 shut down the world, optical companies stepped up. This year, innumerable optical companies shifted gears in March and April and did their part to help frontline workers everywhere by producing PPE, donating materials for PPE, or sourcing PPE themselves and making sure it ended up in the hands of those who needed it most.

Among those companies were: ClearVision, Modo, OptiSource, Rochester Optical, Safilo, SN Optical, Studio Optyx, and many more. ■



*ClearVision offers a full line of PPE for ECPs to purchase, including goggles, disposable and reusable face masks, face shields, sneeze guards, sanitizer, gloves, no-touch thermometers, breath shields and more.*



*Modo added a PPE category for its ECP customers in May, after donating 50,000 masks to NYC Health + Hospitals Jacobi in the Bronx.*



*Safilo launched the PPE Eyewear Solutions Program, a line of face shields and protective eyewear, and its proprietary brand Smith donated 4,000 yards of goggle strap material to help Yeti Cycles make 10,000 face shields at its headquarters in Golden, Colorado.*

## Modo Puts Eco First

**S**ustainability and environmental responsibility underscores everything that Modo's Eco Eyewear does. The company's eyewear is made of 95 percent recycled or bio-based materials, and it plants a tree with D.C. based non-profit, Trees for the Future, for every Eco frame sold. To date, Modo said, they've planted more than 2 million trees.

For ECPs, Modo offers marketing materials focused on their social purpose initiatives, which

helps ECPs tell the Modo story to their patients. The materials are a direct result of customer feedback, Modo said.

Alessandro Lanaro, Modo's CEO, said, "We have a responsibility to leave the world a better place than how we found it. Together with Trees for the Future, One Frame, One Tree is making a positive impact not only on the environment, but for the people." ■



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### Warby Parker Expands Its Involvement to Social and Access Causes

From its origins as an eyewear e-commerce retailer just over 10 years ago, Warby Parker kept social purpose as a core part of its business approach. The company's "Buy a Pair, Give a Pair" concept helped to support the work of VisionSpring and also resonated with a new generation of consumers who were drawn to the contemporary idea of connecting purchases to a good cause.

In this particular year, as Neil Blumenthal, co-founder and co-CEO of the company discussed during this year's virtual VM Global Leadership Summit, the company pivoted its sense of corporate social responsibility. At the start of the pandemic, it provided PPE to those on the frontlines.

In addition, the company has recently taken steps to promote more diversity and inclusion initiatives, which has included publishing a more robust Racial Equity Strategy, partnering with New England College of Optometry to provide scholarships to Black optometry students, and stepping up as one of three lead sponsors (along with National Vision and MyEyeDr.) with Black Eyecare Perspective on career fairs at HBCUs across the country.

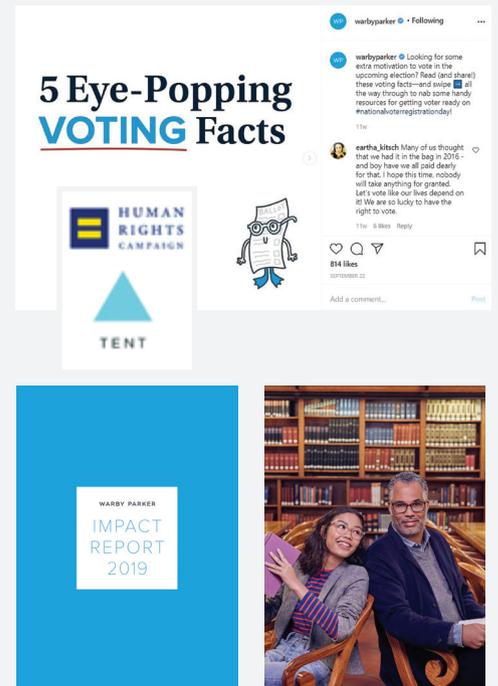
And, in the months leading up to the national election, Warby Parker joined with other corporate

leaders to take steps to encourage both employees and customers to vote, including providing employees with paid time off to vote and volunteer as poll workers in the upcoming election. The company is a dedicated partner to Civic Alliance, Business For America, and Time to Vote to amplify the importance of providing all Americans with the access, resources, and time they need to vote.

More recently, Warby was one of 23 companies who pledged to support LGBTQ refugees. The Tent Partnership for Refugees, a network of over 130 major companies committed to integrating refugees, and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC), the educational arm of the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights organization, joined forces for the program.

Warby has committed to mentoring LGBTQ refugees in New York, "At Warby Parker, we've always strived to create an environment where our teams can bring their authentic selves to work. Our hope is that we can provide that support to the LGBTQ+ refugee community as they seek new and continued employment opportunities," said Blumenthal.

The company continues to be transparent about



its activities and values through its Impact Report, which is available on its website. Blumenthal said, "We believe that businesses are part of a community and should give back." ■

### Paws N Claws: Focusing On Our Furry Friends

Paws N Claws Eyewear is an eyewear business built on the purpose of helping animals. The company gives a portion of its proceeds to animal charities and animal shelters year-round, and since the brand was founded in 2011 its contributions to the ASPCA have totaled over \$60,000. Even the design of the eyewear itself is dedicated to this cause, featuring animal prints, paw prints and other pet-related design details.



*Animal lovers Sam and Phyllis Shapiro head up the team at Paws N Claws Eyewear.*

This year, the Paws N Claws team, which is headed up by animal lovers Sam and Phyllis Shapiro, also stepped forward to get PPE into the hands of those who need it. Under Paws N Claws' parent company, EyeDeals Eyewear & PPE Products Co., they launched Cover Up Helper, a new division dedicated to just PPE for both ECPs and their customers. ■

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### OneSight Expands Sustainable Vision Care Work in U.S. and Around the World

Continuing its eyecare missions internationally and in the U.S., OneSight has also been extending its sustainable efforts in putting together vision centers in the U.S. and around the world that can offer long term solutions to the hardest hit who need access to vision care and vision correction. Luxottica is the founding sponsor of OneSight which also now works with a range of company and brand partners to support its work.

In this past year, OneSight's charitable programming in 2020 helped more than 13,500 people receive eye exams and glasses, delivered across a range of programming formats including 12 charitable clinics, screening events, and a national program to address those negatively impacted by the pandemic in partnership with LensCrafters.

In order to continue to provide vision care in the midst of the COVID environment, OneSight overhauled its clinic and sustainable vision center protocols to ensure safety for patients, volunteers, staff, and partners. OneSight drove additional charitable impact by donating over 250,000 frames for people in need during the pandemic.

In April, OneSight launched an Online Vision Check on its website that has so far helped almost

15,000 people check their vision and recommend next steps for them to access quality vision care.

Throughout 2020, OneSight opened 24 new sustainable vision centers—these new centers will provide local, affordable vision care access to 7.3 million people. This brings its total number of sustainable vision centers to 195, with total vision care access of over 42 million people.

Of these sustainable vision centers, several are in the U.S. While some are currently closed or limited in operation due to COVID-19 restrictions, they will resume operations as soon as restrictions allow, according to Jeff Wallace, OneSight's director of global marketing. There are 8 in California, 9 in Ohio, and one each in New York, Indiana and Georgia.

In 2021, OneSight will continue its efforts "to bring vision care to everyone, everywhere." Wallace noted, "Due to ongoing COVID-19 precautions, we are focusing our efforts on delivering care where it is needed most, while minimizing travel and utilizing local volunteers as much as possible."

In the U.S., OneSight is planning charitable clinics that deliver vision care to under resourced communities in New York City, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Washington D.C., and Kansas City. The organization



*OneSight and North Fulton Community Charities partnered to offer free eye exams and glasses to over 275 children and adults. The 3-day charitable clinic was sponsored by Aetna, a CVS Health company, which contributed \$50,000.*

will also continue its charitable work with Native American communities and with migrant communities in Central California and on the Southern border with Mexico.

As part of its continued Sustainable Vision Care work, OneSight plans to open 25 new vision centers in 2021 across Africa and China, bringing long-term access to vision care to more than 5 million more people. Looking even farther ahead, the group's goal is to add other countries in Africa and Southeast Asia, to add approximately 20 million more people with access over the next five years, said Wallace.

Those looking to take part and/or partner with OneSight's work can find more details at <https://onesight.org/engage>. ■

### For RestoringVision, a Year of Resilience, Transformation and Growth

For RestoringVision, the largest nonprofit provider of new reading glasses to people living in impoverished communities worldwide, 2020 has been a year of resilience, transformation, and growth. During this unprecedented year, RestoringVision's commitment to bring clear vision to the most vulnerable and disenfranchised populations has only grown stronger.

In response to COVID-19, the optical nonprofit adapted and enhanced its work to ensure it could continue to give the gift of clear vision to those who need it the most. While the pandemic continues to take a toll on vulnerable populations and poverty rates continue to rise, the demand for

RestoringVision's eyeglasses dramatically increased this year. As a result, the organization expanded its programs in several regions and launched new pilot projects to support refugee and similar displaced populations. This year despite all of the adversities and challenges ushered in by the pandemic, RestoringVision has helped over 1.4M people access the eyeglasses they need to see clearly, stay safe, and remain productive.

As the unmet need for reading glasses continues to grow at an even greater rate, RestoringVision has set its sights on growing its capacity to expand its impact in the year ahead. Thanks to its donors' commitments and extraordinary support, Restor-



*A Nigerian woman trying reading glasses with the assistance of a volunteer while both wear masks and follow safety protocols.*

ingVision is concluding one of the most unparalleled years in history on a positive note creating steady momentum to serve more people in need in 2021.

To learn more about RestoringVision and its work, please visit [www.RestoringVision.org](http://www.RestoringVision.org). ■