

# The Culture of Socially Conscious Shopping



This December, *Vision Monday* has rounded up some of the eyewear and eyecare businesses leading the way when it comes to corporate responsibility, highlighting a few of the ways our community has come together for the greater good. ■



# PURCHASING WITH A PURPOSE

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

### 141 Eyewear

#### Giving Back One for One



Photos by: Auston James

Since its inception eight years ago, social purpose has played an integral part in 141 Eyewear's brand. As the company has continued to grow, so has its outreach and community involvement with ODs and opticians with whom they partner.

"The name of our brand actually lines up perfectly with our social purpose marketing. For each pair of 141 Eyewear purchased, we

give a new pair of glasses to a person in need. One for One," Kyle Yamaguchi, co-founder of 141 Eyewear said.

141 Eyewear's giving mission has continued to garner a positive response within its community with many of their accounts using 141 Eyewear as part of their own community outreach. "I think they appreciate that we are giving the same frame they are selling off their own boards, so they know they can give away a good quality product to folks in need within their very own community," Yamaguchi added.

Along with its 141 mission, the company recently spent time volunteering at King County Clinic in Seattle and also were able to donate 1,500 frames to the clinic. 141 Eyewear has been able to donate 1,500 frames to King County Clinic for the last three years. Yamaguchi noted that opticians were "thrilled" to receive quality product that better suited patients since they were used to receiving second-hand or old/discontinued product in the past.

"At the end of the day, we all want to do well and we all want to improve our community. We all need to help those in need and by doing so, we will improve the community around us. If we all help out, our community will only continue to improve as, ultimately, we are all in this together."

Visit Website: [www.141eyewear.com](http://www.141eyewear.com)

## ClearVision

### Cultivating a Culture of Caring

ClearVision's philanthropy and social purpose is deeply rooted in its company's culture beginning with its founder, Fred Friedfeld who believed in the "golden rule" of treating others how you would want to be treated. Today, this philosophy continues to be one of ClearVision's guiding principles.

"Our owners have always considered the community to be one of our stakeholders, but five years ago we formed an official philanthropy



committee: CVO Cares. This group is completely employee-driven, and has weaved a previously extracurricular activity into our daily existence. We pay very close attention to social and environmental needs and allow current events and our local community to inform exactly how we give back," the company stated.

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This reputation of caring for its community and employees that ClearVision has built has translated to its customers and vendors while at the same time showing a positive response to CVO's initiatives.

"We actually had a customer who visited our Long Island headquarters and met with our CVO Cares team to learn how he could apply some of what we do into his own practice. We've also been invited to speak to other local businesses and offer guidance on how to implement philanthropy into their organization," the company said.

ClearVision believes in the importance of getting involved in social purpose causes as a family-run business and understands that while not everyone might have extra funds to donate, people can give their time. The company offers 16 hours of paid volunteer work per year, making giving back fun while fostering leadership and creating a positive company culture through employee engagement.

"Part of being a responsible business is supporting, at a micro-level, the neighborhoods we live and work in, and on a macro-level, the causes that affect humanity. Our philosophy is that when we win, we share, and part of our values-based culture is to support compelling causes that offer a feel-good opportunity for our employees," ClearVision said.

Visit Website: [www.cvoptical.com](http://www.cvoptical.com)

## Eyes of Faith

### 'See Life' With Eyes of Faith

Eyes of Faith, whose 10th anniversary is approaching in 2019, is gearing up to launch a new brand message: See Life—which ties in to its mission assistance program—Wear & Share. Through this program, Eyes of Faith has the opportunity to share their faith while giving the gift of sight to those in need.

"To See Life through Eyes of Faith glasses is



meaningful in so many ways to the 20+ million faith-conscious patients who want to Wear & Share their faith—they see their own daily life through a faith-enriched design and they see others' lives improved through the program that is supported by their purchase," said Jim Schneider, co-founder of Eyes of Faith.

Through the work that Eyes of Faith has continued to do, they've positively impacted the organizations and causes that benefit from them. When Eyes of Faith first introduced its Wear &

Share program they originally thought it would principally support mission work outside of the U.S. However, Eyes of Faith has gotten involved in the gift of sight with numerous eyecare professionals that are serving and connecting Eyes of Faith to their local communities.

Schneider said, "We volunteer at and donate Eyes of Faith frames to Vision Care from the Heart, an annual event with our very first optical partner, Dr. Robert Prazer of Pediatric and Adult Vision Care in Wexford, Penn. We also partner with Kennedy Eye Care, of McAlester, Okla., to support a local mission group called Shared Blessings.

"When Shared Blessings determines that someone has a special eyecare need, Kennedy Eye Care provides an eye exam and we provide the Eyes of Faith frame. And we are especially thankful to the Essilor Vision Foundation who partners with us to provide lenses for these local programs," he added.

Visit Website: [www.eofoptical.com](http://www.eofoptical.com)

## EYESPOT Chestnut Hill

### Combining Luxury and Social Purpose

For Massachusetts-based optical boutique EYESPOT, customer and patient response to social purpose initiatives has been clear from the start. The luxury boutique runs their own Give a Pair, Get a Pair program, in which one pair of glasses is donated to a child in need in Nepal for every pair purchased at EYESPOT. It's something customers have been excited about, said a spokesperson for the boutique, and "they are very responsive to the program."

In addition to their Give a Pair, Get a Pair program, EYESPOT is involved with a number of other social purpose initiatives. These include a partnership with New Eyes for the Needy, which involves EYESPOT shipping out a box of used glasses every three months, which are then re-

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furnished and donated to those who need them. This is another initiative that the team has seen their clients respond positively to, along with their partnership with the Birat Eye Hospital in



Nepal, their BFund Halloween candy drive, and the Real Golfers Wear Pink program to support breast cancer research.

Beyond these programs, EYESPOT has made it a point to almost exclusively stock eyewear

brands that participate in philanthropic initiatives, including All Frames, Krewe, Maui Jim, Etnia Barcelona, and I.a. Eyeworks. This decision has allowed EYESPOT and their clients to participate in social initiatives on every level. It makes shopping something people can feel good about, and allows customers to walk away from their time at EYESPOT feeling like they've done something that will make someone else's life just a little bit better.

Visit Website: [www.eyespot.com](http://www.eyespot.com)

## Rosin Eyecare

### Putting Community First

For Chicago based practice Rosin Eyecare, social purpose partnership has become an important way to connect with their community and beyond. The practice partners with VSP's Eyes of Hope right now, and, in 2019, is launching a partnership with Metropolitan Family Services, a non-profit with the mission to help strengthen families and communities. Rosin Eyecare's partnership aims to help raise funds which will support Metropolitan Family Services various programs, including mental health, parenting fundamentals, early learning programs, senior services and legal aid.

Taking part in local social purpose initiatives has proven to be a valuable way for Rosin Eyecare to connect to their community—and it benefits everyone involved. A spokesperson for Rosin Eyecare explained, “getting involved in initiatives like this is important because it allows us to empower and care for our Chicago communities beyond providing eyecare.”

Social purpose not only allows Rosin Eyecare to feel empowered, but it helps their patients feel that way as well. The spokesperson continued, “Our patients share that they appreciate our involvement in social purpose initiatives because it helps them give to a notable cause while doing something routine such as going



to the eye doctor and updating glasses. People feel connected to their community knowing their contributions benefit local groups.”

In addition to getting involved on their own, the team at Rosin Eyecare has noticed the ways in which their customers are drawn to eyewear brands that support social purpose, too. “We have absolutely witnessed our patients seeking brands or efforts that support a cause,” a

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spokesperson explained. “For example, we have seen patients choose to order a frame from a brand that donates funds from each purchase for eye exams and eyewear to children of third world countries over a frame with more brand or fashion recognition.”

Visit Website: [www.rosineyecare.com](http://www.rosineyecare.com)

## SUSTAINABILITY MINDETS

### Costa

Protecting the Water Loving Community



Cause is one of the aspects that makes up Costa's DNA. Driven by the idea that change starts from within, the company has internal-

ized corporate social responsibility in a variety of ways including the use of bio-based, eco-friendly resin in their nylon sunglasses and optical frames, the release of their 2018 Limited Edition Untangled Collection crafted from recycled fishing nets in partnership with Patagonia and Bureo, the foundation of its #KickPlastic movement, their partnerships with various conservation groups and their work with OCEARCH, a group of explorers and scientists dedicated to collecting shark research. In addition to this, Costa has made a difference close to home through its relief efforts after Hurricane Irma.

“Being purpose driven is an integral part of who we are. Whether that's protecting our oceans or caring for our communities, our employees want to be part of making the world a better place—without their passion and the support of our customers, we wouldn't be where we are today,” said Holly Rush, CEO, Costa.

With Costa's community spanning a wide array of interests and locations across the “water-loving community” the company supports an array of water-related causes and has found out what's important to its consumers. Returning to the idea that change starts from within, Costa has started with the staff they hired to manage cause efforts with key stakeholders. The Costa ‘Community Leaders’ are Costa employees whose entire professional responsibility is to work with various fishing communities to recognize issues and find ways to help.

“The only way we know what to support is by talking to the people in these communities and seeing what they want,” said Mike Holliday, in-shore community manager, Costa. “We try to engage them on many levels—whether it's by fishing with them or attending events with them to talk to them about environmental priorities.”

Visit Website: [www.costadelmar.com](http://www.costadelmar.com)

### Genusee

Doing Good for People and Planet

The eyewear brand Genusee was founded on the principles of doing good for people and the planet. This brand, made in Flint, Michigan,



designs and manufactures optical and sunglass styles from recycled plastic water bottles and employs returning citizens as artisans to make

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the glasses.

This unique company implements its mission through four platforms. The first aim is to reduce localized plastic waste by prioritizing the use of pre-existing materials in the supply chain, the company stated. In addition to this, Genusee aims to create living wage jobs that anyone can be trained to do. The company has worked with the M.A.D.E institute and Michigan Works to hire returning citizens who can be trained and empowered as artisans to create their eyewear.

Genusee is seeing its four-part mission become a reality through its positioning as a circular economy eyewear brand. “Due to growing global populations and the stress it is creating on the environment we must switch from a linear economy to a circular economy. What that means is we have designed with the end use of our product in mind so that it is easier to repair and reuse again and again,” Genusee said.

Along with these three pillars, Genusee is committed to giving back to Flint, Michigan. The company has planted over 300 trees with the Genesee Conservation District and is committed to planting one tree for every person who signs up for their e-mail list. They also give 1 percent of their profits to the Community Foundation of Greater Flint and split between two funds: the Flint Kid’s Child Health & Development and Flint Promise. Genusee has also sponsored a mural with the Flint Public Art Project.

Visit Website: [www.genusee.com](http://www.genusee.com)

## Modo

### Preserving Sight and Protecting the Environment

Sustainability and social responsibility are driving forces within Modo’s culture. With purpose as one of the company’s pillars Modo has currently helped 650,000 children in India by providing free screenings and all comprehensive follow-up care through its BUY A FRAME— HELP A CHILD SEE pro-



gram. They’re also on track to achieve their goal of helping one million children by 2020. Additionally, with their ECO brand, Modo has planted 1.8 million trees in Cameroon with its ONE FRAME – ONE TREE program and will be celebrating two million trees planted by Earth Day 2019.

When it comes to the ever-changing consumer, Modo has found that consumer reactions to socially conscious product has increased over time and have noted the cultural shift of people being more comfortable with brands and purpose combining.

“When we began, the response was good but timid because the cultural dialogue about purpose was less prevalent, but today, we’re grate-

ful to say, that the positive response and loyalty to our brands is overwhelming,” Rebecca Giefer, Modo COO and partner said.

Along with this, Modo’s social purpose initiatives have had a direct, positive impact on the organizations they’ve sought to aid including the Seva Foundation with whom Modo partners with on its BUY A FRAME— HELP A CHILD SEE program. “Together with Seva, we have traveled to the sites where our services are provided and have seen the amazing benefits of this program first-hand,” Giefer added.

She continued, “With ECO we work with Trees for the Future, and with our partnership they have been able to boost their operations in Cameroon. We have learned together the importance of going one step further and educating the farmers of Cameroon to have a more lasting impact than what just planting a tree gives. It is a learning process, but we are extremely proud of our relationship with our partners and the continued learning spirit of our conversations.

“Companies need to stand for something. Companies need to make a difference.”

Visit Website: [www.modo.com](http://www.modo.com)

## neubau eyewear

### Seeing & Doing Good Through Urban Sustainability

Austrian eyewear brand neubau has remained true to its motto of See & Do Good, keeping sustainability at the core of its brand. “For us, this motto of See & Do Good translates into engaging with the environment with respect and awareness, producing frames in an environmentally friendly way and also supporting visionary urban projects. So, not only does neubau craft its product from a sustainable material called natural PX, they also partner with organizations on sustainability initiatives,” the company said.

Natural PX is a highly developed polymer derived from organically based, renewable raw

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materials, resulting in fewer CO2 emissions, the company stated. The oil from the seeds of the castor oil plant provide the original source for more than half of the material.

As neubau eyewear gives top priority to the quality of the frames, natural PX more than



matches the standards of previously used materials. Also, this focus on conscious consumption extends to the materials used in the company's accessories including frame cases, cleaning

cloths and other sales and marketing tools.

In addition to this, neubau has teamed up with The Honeybee Conservancy in New York City to promote urban gardeners through their initiative. This partnership has brought honeybee hives to two urban farms in New York City while celebrating neubau eyewear's commitment to using sustainable materials.

This program reflects neubau eyewear's aim to create and support concepts that show consideration to the environment, as well as its desire to partner with like-minded organizations to encourage an eco-friendly lifestyle.

Visit Website: [www.neubau-eyewear.com](http://www.neubau-eyewear.com)

## Timberland Eyewear

### A Commitment to Urban Greening

Timberland Eyewear from Marcolin follows the Timberland brand's commitment to creating products responsibly. A range of styles from Marcolin's Timberland Eyewear has earned the Earthkeepers mark meaning that at least 35 percent of the plastic material used in the creation of the product is deemed bio-based and from renewable resources.

Earthkeepers started as a collection of boots in 2007. It has since evolved into an overarching philosophy that guides the Timberland brand, including a commitment to make products responsibly, protect and restore the outdoors, and serve communities around the globe.

Additionally, earlier this year Timberland kicked off a weeklong series of events in New York City with the goal of inspiring and equipping the community to celebrate nature. As a part of this initiative, 150 volunteers from Timberland, including 14 from Marcolin in partnership with Journeys and the Student Conservation Association, joined forces to restore a rooftop greenhouse, install a living roof and construct an outdoor classroom and gathering space at the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics in East Harlem.



In addition to this, Timberland has made a pledge to create or restore 500,000 square feet of green space in U.S. cities over the next five years. This will include at least one project in New York City for each of the five years. This new pledge elevates Timberland's existing urban greening commitment, which transformed 130,000 square feet of city space—including the East Harlem project—into green spaces to benefit the local community.

Visit Website: [www.en.marcolin.com/brand/timberland](http://www.en.marcolin.com/brand/timberland)

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## HEALTH CARE HEROES

### National Vision

#### Solving the Vision Health Crisis Through Charity

At National Vision, the company has sought to focus its philanthropic efforts on using its “unique optical expertise” and knowledge to maximize its social purpose impact. National Vision targets its give-back initiatives in three



core areas: convening and connecting an optical health “ecosystem” working to solve the public health vision crisis; serving the optically underserved in both the U.S. and the developing

world; and seeking ways to engage the entire National Vision family in philanthropic activities to maximize impact, the company said.

Through its charitable foundation, 20/20 Quest, National Vision partners with and supports groups including VisionSpring, RestoringVision, VOSH, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. While the company has been focused on providing a philanthropic outlet for their optometrists and optical experts throughout the organization, they’ve been able to see the results of this outreach.

“Over the course of our years working with BGCA, we have heard countless stories about the impact a free pair of glasses has made in a child’s life. From increasing their self-esteem and confidence, to helping to improve their grades to just being able to help ease a financial burden, we are so honored to have an opportunity to help make a difference,” National Vision stated.

Through these charitable partnerships, National Vision has directly assisted approximately 900,000 individuals to see and has indirectly contributed to improving the vision of approximately 15 million individuals globally to date.

Company CEO Reade Fahs said, “At National Vision, we think of ourselves as a fast-growing business engine fueling a fast-growing philanthropic engine. As one of the largest optical retailers, we play a unique leadership role in convening, connecting and helping to shape an optical health ecosystem that partners with a variety of social enterprises, suppliers and companies to solve this major global public health vision crisis.

“We are striving to create solutions to the global optical health crisis, ultimately enabling more people to get the eyecare and eyewear they need,” he said.

“We know that research shows that when given the choice, people prefer to spend their money with companies that give back. Through partnerships such as the one between our brand America’s Best Contacts & Eyeglasses and the

Boys & Girls Clubs of America, we are proud to show consumers that we care and are committed to doing everything we can to help all people get the eyecare and eyewear they need,” the company said.

Visit Website: [www.nationalvision.com](http://www.nationalvision.com)

## TOMS

### Breaking Ground With “One For One”

From day one, TOMS has been a company dedicated to social purpose—in fact, it was the company’s famous “One for One” model, pioneered



with their canvas shoes, which turned them into a household name over a decade ago. TOMS has been committed to giving back for 12 years, and,

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in that time, they've provided over 600,000 sight restorations around the world.

TOMS launched their eyewear in 2011. Today, they work with 11 Sight Giving Partners around the world to help bring sight to those in need. With eyewear, TOMS' One for One model differs slightly from their traditional model: for every purchase of TOMS optical and sunglasses, a medical professional performs a comprehensive eye exam. Then, each patient receives treatment, including prescription glasses, sight-saving surgery, and other medical treatments. It's more than just giving one getting one—it's getting one, and giving something that will change a stranger's life forever.

TOMS' commitment to social purpose hasn't changed throughout the years, but the brand does recognize the need to adapt the way they work as the world changes. In particular, the brand has committed to backing young people, especially as American youth takes political activism into their own hands.

According to a company spokesperson, "we're partnering with young activists, change-makers, and organizations to evolve our giving model, and put our company profits toward solving the problems that impact the world today." And with a brand new End Gun Violence Together campaign, TOMS has added another social purpose initiative to their growing list.

As the pioneer of the "One for One" model, companies look to TOMS as an example and model when it comes to social purpose, and this is something TOMS leans into and is proud of.

A company spokesperson said, "TOMS has always been about Giving and we have seen hundreds of other companies follow suit and incorporate social impact into their business model. We are so proud to have inspired them and hope that more companies prioritize giving back so collectively we can make an even bigger impact. It is known that Gen Z and Millennial consumers are very interested in the

impact their purchases have. Incorporating social purpose into the business model allows our customers to be part of the movement to build a better tomorrow."

Visit Website: [www.toms.com/optical](http://www.toms.com/optical)

## VSP's Eyes of Hope

### Bringing Sight to Millions

VSP Global's Eyes of Hope is entirely dedicated to its social purpose mission: increasing access to eyecare and eyewear for those who have been denied it. Since its inception, VSP Global has partnered with VSP's network of doctors to provide no-cost eyecare and eyewear to more than 2 million people in need. Under Eyes of Hope, they have committed to helping a million more people by 2020.

VSP's Vision Care president, Kate Renwick-Espinosa, calls VSP "a mission-driven company." And social purpose is not just one part of their mission as a company—it's the whole thing. Renwick-Espinosa explained, "Through our partnership with VSP network doctors, we're able to provide the infrastructure and eyewear so that they can provide critical eyecare. It's a unique partnership to help close this huge gap in access to care."

Although Eyes of Hope's central mission has always remained the same, the way they approach social purpose has adapted and expanded over time, all with the goal of bringing eyecare to more people. "While our brand's social purpose hasn't changed in focus, over time, we have evolved Eyes of Hope to address the lack of access to care for adults as well as children," said Renwick-Espinosa.

The impact of Eyes of Hope's work is tangible—but they've also learned that helping people see does more than just improve their vision. Kristin H., a recipient of Eyes of Hope's programming, shared how Eyes of Hope



changed more than just her eyesight—"I was in a domestic violence relationship... I hadn't had an eye exam in five years. I was squinting all the time and I had scratched glasses. It was a daily reminder that I wasn't quite right, I wasn't quite whole. When they said I could get new glasses—I jumped on it. I am just so grateful that there are corporations like VSP and that there are doctors, like those who partner with them, to help people like me get their life on track with something so simple and vital."

Visit Website: [www.vspglobal.com/cms/vspglobal-outreach/home.html](http://www.vspglobal.com/cms/vspglobal-outreach/home.html)

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## CARING FOR MAN'S BEST FRIEND

### Paws N Claws

#### Letting Customers Show Their Stripes

For Paws N Claws, business and social purpose are inextricable. Led by husband and wife team Sam and Phyllis Shapiro, Paws N Claws donates a portion of its proceeds to the American ASPCA, carving out a space in the eyewear market for customers passionate about animal rescue.

At Paws N Claws, supporting pet rescue is decidedly more than just throwing money at a trendy cause—it's a central pillar of the brand's identity. A love for animals and a passion for giving back make up the company's core values, touching everything they do—including the eyewear itself, which is designed with pet lovers in mind.

Frames from Paws N Claws' special edition Res-



cue line feature a gold "Rescue" logo embellished on the temple, while all frames in their other lines include paw prints or bones in their design. For cus-

tomers, this turns shopping at Paws N Claws into a good deed they can proudly display every day.

As Paws N Claws has grown, the brand has been able to vary the ways in which they give back. Recently, they've expanded into the Canadian market, donating a portion of those proceeds to the Canadian Federation of Human Societies and Humane Canada.

And in September of this year, Paws N Claws changed things up by matching every purchase from their special edition Rescue line with a box of Milkbones donated to a Pittsburgh area animal rescue or pet shelter in need. These changes allow Paws N Claws to adapt, while still remaining loyal to pet rescue and eyewear, which the team calls their "keystone visions."

Paws N Claws calls itself "the brand that makes you feel good," something they achieve by connecting with a larger cause, and building their brand around social purpose.

Visit Website: [www.pawsnclawseyewear.com](http://www.pawsnclawseyewear.com) ■

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