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CONTACT:
Becky Mayad
Essilor Vision Foundation
214.352.1881 work
214.697.7745 cell
becky@essilor-foundation.org

**MRS. LAURA BUSH VISITS KIDS VISION FEST IN DALLAS AND SPEAKS OUT
REGARDING IMPORTANCE OF GOOD VISION CARE**

If vision problems aren't addressed, research suggests children may face lifelong struggles with literacy, low self-esteem, unemployment, poverty and crime

DALLAS, Tex. (Jan. 26, 2010) – Stating that “being able to see clearly is vital to literacy,” Mrs. Laura Bush stressed the importance of good vision care at the inaugural Kids Vision Fest, presented by the Essilor Vision Foundation and the Kids Vision For Life Coalition on January 19 at the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library in Dallas. More than 1,000 children were screened at the free festival, and approximately 500 kids received free eye exams and glasses.

“As a former teacher and librarian, I appreciate the importance of eye exams for students. When a child cannot see well, he or she cannot learn well. Learning to read is fundamental for education, and being able to see clearly is vital to literacy,” said Mrs. Laura Bush. “Vision problems impair a student’s ability to see the chalkboard, read a book, or use the computer. The Essilor Vision Foundation is working to eliminate poor vision in students throughout our country.”

Mrs. Bush began her visit to Kids Vision Fest by touring the Mobile Vision Van, a “vision clinic on wheels” where eye doctors conducted eye exams, children selected eyeglass frames, and glasses were edged and fitted. After visiting with children in the games and activities areas, she read the book co-authored with her daughter Jenna Bush Hager – Read All About It! – to 20 children from the West Dallas Community School.

During the media event, she was joined by Dallas ISD Superintendent of Schools Michael Hinojosa; Dallas County District Judge Cheryl Shannon; Laura Leppert, wife of Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert, and Laurie Evans, director of Dallas Public Libraries, to address the importance of good vision care for children.

The surprising reality is that one in four American children has an uncorrected vision problem – and the number can climb much higher in inner-city communities – yet research shows a large number of those children are not wearing glasses today. If these vision problems are not addressed, research suggests that children may face lifelong struggles with literacy, low self-esteem, unemployment, poverty and crime. (In fact, Essilor Vision Foundation found that 78% of the incarcerated youth in two of the Dallas County Juvenile Justice facilities had at least one vision problem).

“It’s all about connecting the dots. Good vision is so crucial – a child with vision problems has difficulty learning and socializing. If vision problems aren’t corrected at a young age, children fall behind and may never catch up,” said Ed Fjordbak, president and CEO of the Essilor Vision Foundation. “That’s when they tend to drop out of school and are at greater risk to land in the juvenile justice system.”

Fjordbak added that “something as simple as providing glasses to kids can lead to increased literacy, which results in fewer societal problems and ultimately a stronger economy.”

Free and open to the general public, Kids Vision Fest provided free vision screenings to all children. Free eye exams and new glasses – featuring the latest styles in eyeglass frames provided by Nouveau Eyewear and Safilo Group– were offered to children ages 4 to 12 who were unable to afford vision care and qualify for other programs such as Medicaid.

Vision care was provided by 14 eye doctors that represented a variety of organizations, including the Houston College of Optometry who works closely with the H.I.S. BridgeBuilders organization.

In addition, the Kids Vision Fest line-up included story-time book readings throughout the day by authors Kristine Kahanek and Rhonda Fischer, artist/writer Karen Blessen, storyteller Brent Simpson, illustrator Don Tate and artist Lamberto Alvarez. Other highlights included visits from the “Eyeball Scientist”; Mavs Man and Sparky the Firedog; musical performances by Garland ISD’s Brandenburg Middle School band; clown visits; Wii games provided by Blockbuster; golfing with the Northern Texas PGA; a variety of creative arts activities; and a “Playing It Safe” presentation by the Ferguson Road Initiative. The various areas – “I See,” “I Read,” “I Play” and “I Will Be” – were designed to help children connect the dots between good vision and success in school and life.

More than 150 volunteers from a variety of businesses and organizations were on hand to assist with registration, screening and the various activities.

“Kids Vision Fest was a big success due to the enthusiastic efforts of so many, from the eye doctors and volunteers who jumped at the chance to help these terrific kids, to the Dallas Public Library who so graciously hosted our event, to Nouveau Eyewear and Safilo Group that provided the eyeglass frames,” said Patrick Esquerre, an Essilor Vision Foundation board member and event organizer. “We owe them all a big THANK YOU.”

Supporters included OneSight that loaned the portable examining lane equipment, Essilor of America, ophthalmologist Dr. Everett Moody and his staff who saw more than 30 children with strabismus and scheduled 17 children for surgery, Nouveau and Safilo Group for providing eyeglass frames, and Jack E. Singley Academy HOSA Program for providing 67 medically-trained volunteers;

Founded in 2007, Essilor Vision Foundation is a public charity established by Dallas-based Essilor of America, the leading manufacturer of optical lenses in the United States. The Foundation’s mission is to eliminate poor vision and its lifelong consequences. Specifically, the Foundation provides free eye exams and new prescription eyewear through in-school and partnership programs to children who cannot get them otherwise. It also educates parents, teachers, caregivers, and community leaders to be aware of the implications of poor vision and watch for signs of vision problems in children.

Essilor Vision Foundation is supported by the **Kids Vision for Life Coalition**, which is believed to be the first-ever community-wide effort to identify children’s vision care as a key tool in improving literacy skills. **The Coalition Advisory Board** is comprised of government and community leaders including U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert and Dallas ISD

Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa.

The **Kids Vision for Life Coalition** partners include American Foundation for the Blind; Boys & Girls Clubs; Catholic Charities of Dallas, Inc.; The Catholic Foundation; Central Dallas Ministries; ChildCareGroup; Circle of Support; Communities in Schools Dallas Region; Dallas County Juvenile Department; Dallas ISD; Dallas Public Library; Dallas Regional Chamber; DFW AHEC; Earning by Learning; Education is Freedom; Essilor Vision Foundation; Ferguson Road Initiative; Head Start of Greater Dallas; H.I.S. BridgeBuilders; Happy Hill Farm; Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation; Low Vision Clinic; North Dallas Shared Ministries; North Texas Food Bank; Northern Texas PGA; OneSight; Parkland; Prevent Blindness; Salesmanship Club; The Center for Community Health at UNT Health Science Center; The Foundation for Community Empowerment; The Legacy Center for Public Policy; United Way; Vision Regeneration; Volunteer Center of North Texas; and YWCA of Metropolitan Dallas.

For more information about Kids Vision Fest or to donate to the Essilor Vision Foundation, please go to www.essilorvision.org or call 214-496-4217.

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About the Essilor Vision Foundation

Essilor Vision Foundation is a public charity established by Dallas-based Essilor of America, the leading manufacturer of optical lenses in the United States. The foundation's mission is to eliminate poor vision and its lifelong consequences.

We strive to give children a brighter future by helping them see the world more clearly. Our programs focus on improving the quality of school vision screenings so fewer children slip through the cracks, providing eye exams and eyeglasses free of charge to children who would not get them otherwise, and educating parents and communities about the importance of children's vision care and the role it plays in literacy, society, and the economy.

About Essilor

Essilor is the leading manufacturer of optical lenses in the United States and is the market leader in progressive, high-index and anti-reflective coated lenses. A pioneer in the development and production of ophthalmic lenses, Essilor employs more than 9,000 people throughout North America. Essilor manufactures optical lenses under the Varilux[®], Crizal[®], Thin&Lite[®], Xperio[™] and DEFINITY[®] and other Essilor brand names. Essilor Laboratories of America (ELOA) is the largest, and most trusted, optical lab network in the U.S. and offers a wide choice of services and lens brands, including Essilor premium lenses, to eyecare professionals across the nation. Essilor of America, Inc. (Essilor) is a subsidiary of Paris-based Essilor International, S.A., a publicly held company traded on the Euronext Paris stock exchange (Reuters: ESSI.PA).

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