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**Essilor Vision Foundation and Kids Vision for Life Coalition
Helped Children See Clearer Over Spring Break at Second-Annual KidsVisionFest**

*Free Event Provided Vision Care Services to Over 1,200 Children,
Eye Exams to 585 Children and Glasses to 483 Children*

DALLAS (March 22, 2011) – Before the doors opened to **KidsVisionFest** on Tuesday, lines were already wrapped around the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe as families waited to get their children's vision checked. The free event, hosted by the Essilor Vision Foundation and the *Kids Vision For Life Coalition*, provided free eye exams and glasses to low-income children. More than 1,200 children received vision care services, and 585 children received free eye exams from doctors of optometry and ophthalmology. Of those, 483 will receive free glasses. Six surgeries were scheduled (related to crossed eyes), one child was referred to a specialist for an infection of the inside of the eye, two children were referred to eyelid specialists, and two will have MRIs related to possible complex problems.

“More than 4,000 people, including parents and siblings, showed up Tuesday. That’s a clear indication that there’s a growing need for kids’ vision care in our community,” said Ed Fjordbak, president of the Essilor Vision Foundation. “If vision problems aren’t corrected at a young age, children fall behind and may never catch up. That’s when they drop out of school or are at greater risk of landing in the juvenile justice system. We couldn’t be happier that the families who came are addressing this often underestimated problem.”

The surprising reality is that almost 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 these children are not wearing glasses today. It further suggests that, when these problems are not addressed, children often face lifelong struggles with literacy, low self-esteem, unemployment, poverty and crime. (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.)

Supporters included the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe that provided the venue; VSP and Special Olympics International that loaned additional portable examining lane equipment; Safilo USA that provided eyeglass frames; Classic Balloon Corporation that donated balloons; Frito-Lay and Topo Chico that supplied drinks and snacks for the kids; La Madeleine French Café and Bakery and Guckenheimer, Inc., that provided food and beverages for the volunteers; Essilor of America that provided financial support; Dr. Tim Kret and Dr. Everett Moody and his staff that donated their vision services; The Alcon Foundation and Nouveau Eyewear that provided gifts for the kids; and The Glad Company, The Clorox Company, and Kimberly-Clark that gave in-kind donations. Volunteers were provided by local high schools and a variety of businesses and organizations to assist with registration, screening and the educational and creative art activities.

A special thanks to the 22 optometrists, many of whom were from H.I.S. BridgeBuilders and the University of Houston School of Optometry, as well as local practitioners; Prevent Blindness and Head Start of Greater Dallas that handled vision screenings; the Lions Clubs and the Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation that brought and managed their Vision Coach: the American Foundation for the Blind that instructed children on Braille, Parkland Health and Hospital System that assisted with registration, and *Al Dia* that provided media support.

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KidsVisionFest also offered activities and family-fun entertainment with a theme of “I See, I Read” including visits by Poppins, the clown-on-the-run, and NFL player Courtney Brown; an improv show by LockedOutComedy; storytelling by Brent Simpson; dance exercises including Zumba by Gloria Lynette Flores; a “Playing It Safe” presentation by the Ferguson Road Initiative; and more.

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 high-quality 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 and Dallas ISD Superintendent Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Senator Royce West, former Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert, optometrist Dr. Clarke Newman, and Brent Christopher of the Communities Foundation of Texas.

The ***Kids Vision for Life Coalition*** partners include American Foundation for the Blind; Boys & Girls Clubs; Catholic Charities of Dallas, Inc.; The Catholic Foundation; ChildCareGroup; Circle of Support; CitySquare; 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; H.I.S. BridgeBuilders; Happy Hill Farm; Head Start of Greater Dallas; Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation; Low Vision Clinic; North Dallas Shared Ministries; North Texas Food Bank; Northern Texas PGA; OneSight; Parkland Health and Hospital System; 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; University of Houston School of Optometry; Vision Regeneration; Volunteer Center of North Texas; and YWCA of Metropolitan Dallas.

For more information, please go to www.essilorvision.org.

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ABOUT THE ESSILOR VISION FOUNDATION

*Essilor Vision Foundation is a public charity and an initiative of Dallas-based Essilor of America. **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 vision problems slip by undetected, 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 spectacle 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). For more information on Essilor, visit the Company’s website at www.essilorusa.com.

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