

Enjoy A Look Back Over the Years.

See and be Seen



Eloise Gay brought four generations to the VIP 17th annual BBQ and Country Western Dance. Seen here are centenarian Fannie Duncan, Eloise Gay, Debbie Croft, Joy Jones, WW (Bill) Gay, Chris Croft and Paul Jones.



Glenn Brown, a long-time VIP volunteer, samples some of his wonderful cooking.



The cooks take a break to pose for the camera during the preparation for the Western day before the BBQ.



Al Kinard, Lynwood Roberts and Ed Witt join the other volunteers in serving the areas' best BBQ.



Carol Baumer leans in close to thank Big Al for his efforts on behalf of VIP.



Very Important People to Vision Is Priceless (back row from left to right): Gail Middleton, Karen Case, Mary Harvey, Gail Horowitz and Norma Adams and in front is Mildred Day and Carol Baumer.



Lina Marie Thornton, Don Wiggins and Janet Betchkal all posed for a picture behind the vision screening equipment.



Paula and Roger Gibson and Martha and Gardner Davis are all smiles at the annual meeting.



Dr. Jerry Knauer III, with the Eye Research Foundation and longtime supporter of Vision Is Priceless Council, enjoys the conversation with his wife, Biggs, and Roger Gibson, Charter Chairman, at the annual meeting.



Gail Middleton receives recognition from Don Wiggins and the Vision Is Priceless Council for three years of service to the Board of Directors.

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A newsletter for friends and volunteers of the Vision Is Priceless Council

Summer 2011

One Pair of Glasses — Three Lives Changed



Jasmin Johnson (right) with her new glasses and VIP's Stephanie Dollings.

Little things that many people take for granted can mean a world of difference to someone in a difficult situation. Recently, VIP helped a young woman, simply by getting a new pair of prescription glasses, and helped change her life and the lives of her sons.

Several years ago, after courageously telling her mother of a family member who had raped her, Jasmin was kicked out and dropped off at a nearby homeless shelter. While there, she was employed full time as an administrative assistant at a hospital, yet was not able to support herself and her two sons on the salary. When that shelter began

having financial struggles, she came to Jacksonville. Determined to get on her feet, she worked with a local nonprofit to find housing and a new job.

While preparing a letter for an upcoming interview, her counselor noticed her holding her glasses together as she read. Her two year old had recently broken her only pair of glasses. She had been struggling to keep the glasses glued together, and was now having to hold the lenses in place. Another woman had found a pair of prescription sunglasses and given them to her, and she was trying to make them work, despite the prescription not being exact. She began to suffer from migraines and had trouble reading and working on the computer. She did not stop her job search, and at interviews would hold the broken pair of glasses together when needed to complete tests and forms.

Her counselor called Vision Is Priceless for help and VIP staff contacted Jasmin. She was appreciative and she did not care what the glasses looked like. VIP was able to replace Jasmin's broken glasses quickly, just in time for a training session for a new job. Now able to see clearly, she started her first day of training with confidence, reading the computer and learning all she needed to successfully secure and keep her new job. She had the highest rating possible for her training program, and now is a registered agent working full-time for the state of Florida in the Department of Children and Families Services. Jasmin now lives in an apartment with her two boys, has a good job with benefits and opportunities to advance and provide her family a financially secure future. In her new position, she is drawing on her experiences and helping others who are struggling with similar situations.

Jasmin, who scored in the top 1% of students in the state when getting her GED, has goals to continue her education in public administration. She wants to help shape public policy to serve others more efficiently, effectively, and compassionately. We have no doubt she will succeed in every challenge she sets, and we are honored that VIP had the resources to help her when it was needed. This is just one example of the impact VIP has had on hundreds of children and adults this year. As we plan for next year, and know how important it is to continue to help our neighbor in their time of need, we are dedicated to serving even more with your help and generosity.

"What VIP did for me, was to hand me back my chance. I was so close, so close to being free from homelessness. I needed a chance. Being able to see, to perform basic functions like reading- so many take for granted. My glasses are a necessity for my survival. My vision is definitely priceless. Thank you VIP." Jasmin Johnson

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Attention All Eye Care Professionals

VIP is Looking for Volunteers to provide eye exams, measure for glasses, or assist at The Way Free Medical Clinic in Green Cove Springs.

15 Years of Service



Thank you for our volunteers and staff who have provided vision screening and sight-saving services for children and adults in the First Coast for fifteen years!



Our Volunteers Change Lives



A longtime friend and volunteer of the organization, Dr. Jeffrey Levenson has donated his time and talents for years to help those in need see clearly. This past year he donated his time to perform several free cataract surgeries and provided dozens of free eye exams at his office and The Way Clinic to help those in need. In addition to his work with VIP, Dr. Levenson also volunteers his time for Volunteers in Medicine, directs the Gift of Sight Program at Baptist, and traveled to Peru with SEE (Surgical Eye Expeditions International). VIP is grateful for each and every one of our Volunteers, our board members, and everyone who helps us serve our community each year. It is rare to have the opportunity to recognize one of our own in a community event, so when Dr. Levenson was

selected by The Jacksonville Business Journal as one of the *2010 Health Care Heroes*, we were very proud! Congratulations Dr. Levenson, and thank you to all of our friends, supporters, and volunteers that make us successful!

Project See

Each year, VIP screens thousands of adults every year in Northeast Florida to identify vision problems and early signs of eye diseases. When a problem is identified, and the individual does not have insurance or the financial resources for follow-up care, VIP helps to facilitate treatment. The past year, the need has been so great that a waiting list for services began to grow. Several partners stepped up to help meet this need with inspiring compassion. Vistakon opened its doors to its own Vision Institute, along with volunteers from SAPNA and HOLA affinity groups. The Clinic was staffed by Vistakon employees including ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians, translators, administrative support, and technicians. VIP's staff worked in collaboration to schedule, arrange transportation, and assist at the clinic to serve 40 individuals on the waiting list. Of those served, 24 required prescription glasses, and they were able to choose their lenses and order glasses on site with the generous help of optician Patty Davalt, owner of Davalt Optical.

The generosity was contagious. In addition to providing 28 free eye exams and 24 pairs of glasses, the doctors at Vistakon identified five individuals with severe eye injuries and diseases, that left untreated, would have resulted in blindness. Two individuals were diagnosed with glaucoma, and two individuals had serious retinal tears, and one man had advanced cataracts. Within days of these diagnoses, VIP's Cared Vision Program volunteers provided free specialty services for the glaucoma and retinal patients, including emergency laser treatment for the angular glaucoma. VIP's staff also worked with Division of Blind Services to help the gentleman with cataracts receive surgery.

Grateful for their gifts of sight, many individuals offered their heartfelt thanks to all of the doctors and volunteers they passed at the clinic. Carmen Suarez, who received much needed glasses and whose husband received sight-saving retinal care, showed her appreciation by donating her time to come back and volunteer as a translator for appointments. What started with a generous gift from Vistakon, has grown into a life-changing program that helps so many, and inspires others to give back. Future Vistakon hosted clinics are already in the planning stages.

Consider how you can improve the lives of those around you, and inspire others to join the cause. Thank you to Vistakon, Davalt Optical, Marco Ophthalmic, and all of our volunteers who continue to make a difference through their support of Vision Is Priceless and our sight-saving services.



Western Remembers a Friend



For close to three decades, a wonderful group of volunteers work for two days to cook the best BBQ dinner around – all to benefit VIP's sight-saving services. Many of these cooks are employees of our two generous and dedicated sponsors; Miller Electric Company and W.W. Gay Mechanical Contractors. The event on March 12 was as fun and delicious as ever. However, this year's event was even more special as the night was dedicated in memory of Walter B. Butler. Mr. Butler was a founding board member of Vision Is Priceless Council, and remained a visionary member supporting the organization in so many ways. He was awarded the "People of Vision Award" for his longstanding service to VIP, and his leadership, wonderful sense of humor, and passion for serving his community will be dearly missed by all who had the fortune to know him.

This year's event was made possible by many sponsors, volunteers, and silent auction donors. Everyone came together to help raise over \$70,000 for Vision Is Priceless Council. On behalf of Vision Is Priceless Council, the Board of Directors, and those we serve, thank you so much for all of your support!

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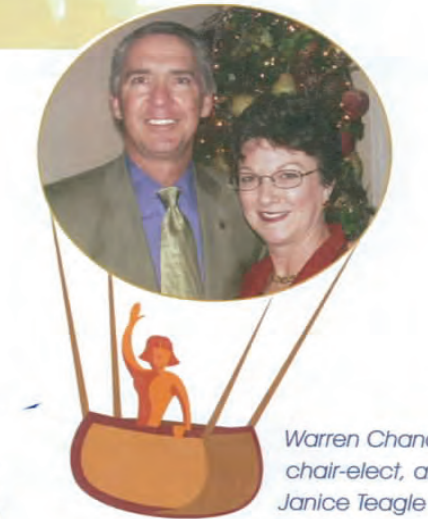


VIP is Celebrating 15 Years!

See and be Seen



A trio of doctors, including Janet Betchkal, Jim Bolling and Bob Hered, take a break from their hard work and enjoy the lovely VIP party in Richard LaMee's beautiful home.



Warren Chandler, chair-elect, and Janice Teagle bring laughter and merriment to the party with their festive spirits.



Andy Turner and Grace Williamson, devoted board members and volunteers extraordinaire, enjoy a moment together sharing memories and smiles.



Evelyn Young enjoys the hospitality of Richard LaMee, VIP's Annual Holiday Host.



Sylvia and Tommy Gower share the joy of the holiday.