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## A Message From Your President

Winter greetings, fellow IAO members! I hope your holiday season was enjoyable.

I think you will find this newsletter informative and indicative of how the IAO is actively working on your behalf. Allow me to highlight a few items of interest.

You will read about "Sight for Soldiers," our program that provided discounted refractive surgery for Iowa National Guard troops that deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq last fall. The program earned the Star Award from the AAO and the Guard is planning to publicly thank the IAO for the valuable service we provided.

As you probably know, our own Mariannette Miller-Meeks has been nominated to lead the Iowa Department of Public Health. We heartily congratulate Mariannette and look forward to working with her! In her new capacity, she will be able to positively influence public policy on issues important to our patients.

We are excited about our prospects for finally achieving legislation that mandates vision screening for Iowa's children. After a long discourse with the Iowa Optometric Association over the past couple of years, we are now closer than ever to meaningful vision screening legislation. We will keep you posted as the proposed legislation makes its way through the State House during the upcoming session.

The AAO has encouraged every state society to assemble a team of Congressional Advocates, each of whom will work directly with a member of Congress. Michael Scott, M.D., has been appointed Coordinator of Iowa's Congressional Advocates, and we thank Dr. Scott for his leadership. You will find a complete list of our Congressional Advocates later in the newsletter. We greatly appreciate their willingness to serve the interests of our patients and our profession. Through direct communication with both of our Senators and all five of our Representatives to the House, our advocacy efforts should become considerably more effective.

I encourage you to read on and learn about the many ways in which the IAO is working for you!

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Haupert, MD  
[chaupertirc@aol.com](mailto:chaupertirc@aol.com), 222-6400

## Screening Legislation on IAO agenda

Our 2010 Legislative agenda includes efforts to increase funding for more preschool screening as well as supporting a Prevent Blindness Iowa proposal for mandatory screening of 1st and 3rd graders. This proposal is the result of an effort to compromise with all vision groups in Iowa and would allow us to remove ourselves as one of only 10 states with no screening requirements. For more information and to see the text of the proposed legislation, see the Legislative Alert Page on our website. This is a member only page. If you need your Username and Password, contact us.

# IAO's Sight for Soldiers Wins AAO "Star Award"



The Iowa Academy of Ophthalmology was among a select group of only three state ophthalmology societies to earn the 2010 State Affairs Star Award, presented on October 18, 2010 by the American Academy of Ophthalmology's (AAO) Secretariat for State Affairs during the Annual Meeting of the AAO in Chicago. IAO received the award for its "Sight for Soldiers" program. President Christopher Haupert, MD, a 2010 graduate of the AAO Leadership Development Program, initiated and chaired the "Sight for Soldiers" program.

Accepting the award are IAO executive director, Tess Young and Andrew Steffensmeier, MD.

The State Affairs Star Award provides special recognition to state ophthalmology societies for their outstanding efforts in a variety of activities including membership development, educational meetings for members, communications, public service, and programs for residents and/or new-to-practice ophthalmologists. The American Academy embraced the program and it was presented at the State Executive Director Forum at the AAO annual meeting in October. We are proud to report that 116 Iowa National Guard soldiers received discounted refractive surgery under the Sight for Soldiers program and are grateful to all the refractive surgeons in the state that agreed to participate.

## Iowa Ophthalmologist to head Iowa Department of Public Health

Iowa Governor-elect Terry Branstad has announced that Dr. Mariannette Miller-Meeks will serve as head of the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) in the Branstad-Reynolds administration. "Dr. Miller-Meeks' dedication to public health is evident from her service and leadership in various medical organizations, and I look forward to working with her as we work to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation," he said. The Iowa Department of Public Health works with local health organizations, lawmakers, health care providers, and businesses to educate the citizens of Iowa on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"I am honored to have been chosen by Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor-Elect Reynolds to head the Iowa Department of Public Health," said Miller-Meeks. "I look forward to working with the Legislature, public health organizations, health care providers and the community to maintain and advance the health of all Iowans.

Congratulations, Dr. Miller-Meeks!

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**Have you paid your 2011 Annual Dues?**

**If you need another invoice or have questions, Contact Tess at the IAO.**

# IAO Annual Meeting

We appreciated your input from our survey regarding the IAO annual meeting. As we said in the previous newsletter, this survey was to determine whether holding a meeting annually was a wise use of our limited resources. We had a 17% response and of those only 51% reported interest in attending an annual meeting every year, CME was important to 62%, 48% wanted meeting in Des Moines, 57% wanted a combination of clinical and business content, and 80% were in favor of a nurse/technician meeting. Based on the results, the IAO decided to forego the 2011 meeting and hold a meeting once every two years.

## Nurse Technician Meeting Scheduled for April 30

The annual meeting survey showed overwhelming support for an IAO sponsored nurse/technician meeting. The IAO will hold its first nurse/technician meeting in Des Moines on April 30. The University is supportive of this idea and Sarah Smith from the University of Iowa is guiding us as we plan this event. CE credit for nurses and technicians will be offered. We look forward to providing this service to our member's practices. More detailed information will be out soon!

## Coding Seminar March 23 in Iowa City

The 2011 Coding Seminar will be held on Wednesday, March 23, at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Coralville Iowa. Don't miss this opportunity for your practice to receive the most up to date coding and compliance information possible. Brochures are included in this mailing or you can access on the Coding and Compliance page of our website.

## Coding Benefits for Members

One of the most important aspects of a successful practice is obtaining appropriate reimbursement for your services. As you know, this has become more and more troublesome over the years and there is no indication that trend will change. Therefore, the IAO member benefits that relate to coding have become increasingly important to your practice.

IAO members are fortunate to have access to the expertise of Joy Newby of Newby Consulting, Inc to guide you through this minefield. Joy's service are provided as a member benefit in several ways:

1. Email alerts are sent to all coding professionals on our list. If your office is not receiving these, please contact us with the email address of your coding professional.
2. These alerts are posted on our website on the Coding and Compliance Page where member access is required. If you do not have your username and password, contact us.
3. Personalized coding help is available for patients of member physicians. Help form is available on our website on the Coding and Compliance page or help requests may be sent by email to [IowaAcademyOp@aol.com](mailto:IowaAcademyOp@aol.com).
4. An annual Coding Seminar is offered with presenter Joy Newby, LPN, CPC, President of Newby Consulting, Inc. This is held each spring in Iowa City. This year's date is Wednesday, March 23. For more information, see enclosed brochure or our website, [www.IowaEyeDocs.org](http://www.IowaEyeDocs.org).
5. For other questions, contact Tess at the IAO who is happy to refer issues to the IMS, the AAO, or elsewhere when needed.

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# The Iowa Department for the Blind with a message for Iowa Ophthalmologists

As Linda Stone's vision worsened, she found herself unable to do many things that used to be mundane: like preparing meals or walking down a flight of stairs. In fact, her two grown daughters had taken away all her kitchen knives for fear that she would cut off a finger. Linda, 63, even moved into one daughter's home in Marshalltown.

She regularly visited her eye doctor to help manage her diabetic retinopathy, but even with medical treatment her vision continued to deteriorate. She was going blind. She could no longer make out the details in a person's face or adequately judge spatial relations. She was despondent, depressed and dependent on her family.

"My daughter made meals for me to eat, did all my banking and bills and matched my clothes up," Linda said. "She took me to the grocery store, took me to church. I really didn't do anything without her. She spent so much time taking care of all my needs, she didn't have time to be just a daughter anymore."

In September 2009, Linda entered the Orientation Center at the Iowa Department for the Blind. She was terrified. She said she couldn't move her legs she was so scared of going through the rehabilitation program. But the program administrators and teachers at the center, plus Linda's counselor, encouraged her—saying that the training she would receive would enable her to become less dependent, more confident and get her life back.

So she stayed. She took the requisite classes of Braille,



home economics, computer training, industrial arts, cane travel and the Business of Blindness, in which students discuss any issues related to blindness. She lived in one of the dormitories provided to students at the Iowa Department for the Blind in downtown Des Moines, and she met others who were struggling with vision loss as she was.

It was no easy task. Linda struggled through the classes. The sleep shades all students wear during training eliminated her residual vision. Even though that vision was very minimal, she had been relying on it to function. She was expected to be engaged in the process and not give up.

"When I got the news I was going to go blind, I didn't see a future. I had no ambitions. I just didn't do anything. I wanted to give up. I came here and it was really hard the first few weeks. I cried and wanted to go home," Linda said.

But then something clicked. Linda persevered. She made three-course meals in home economics that her peers devoured. She began getting through the Braille alphabet. She fell in love with the wood shop in industrial arts, where she worked on creating a TV stand. She also became adept at navigating the many stairs in the building, walking to destinations around downtown Des Moines, and doing things for herself. She had missteps, as everyone does. One day she put body lotion on her toothbrush and found out the hard way. Another time her white cane fell down the elevator shaft.

But these were not incidents that held her back. She knew that she could not use her vision to do the things in life she wanted to do, and that the training and support she was receiving at the Orientation Center would help her continue to do those things in modified ways.

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# The Iowa Department for the Blind (continued)

Linda graduated from the Center in August, almost a year after she began training. She returned to Marshalltown to live independently in an apartment. She talked about going golfing, volunteering and being an active community member. The Orientation Center did not take away her diabetic retinopathy or restore her sight; it instilled a new confidence in her abilities and enabled her to see that vision loss did not equate desolation.

This past October, Linda returned to the Department's annual Orientation Center alumni weekend. After leaving the Center, Linda reported that she had a difficult two weeks adjusting to "real life." But she pushed through and began incorporating the skills she learned into her daily life, such as taking the city bus to run errands and Brailleing her grocery list. She said she loves not depending on her daughter any more. In fact, Linda said she fired her daughter from taking care of her.

It feels like I'm free. There's nothing I can't do on my own," Linda said. "I feel like a whole new person. I am independent. I can do everything I did before, I just do it differently.

Linda's story is not uncommon. Thousands of Iowans have had similar transformations through help from the Iowa Department for the Blind. Some of them spent time in the Orientation Center, others have gone through our Vocational Rehabilitation program receiving low-vision aids to help them keep their jobs or obtain new employment. Some have utilized our Library service that sends books and magazines in alternative formats through the U.S. mail free of charge. And others have used our Independent Living services after they are beyond working age and want to remain active participants in their communities and families.

The Department works directly from referrals. When we receive a new referral for services, the client is assessed and assigned either a vocational rehabilitation counselor or an independent living teacher who then visits the person in their home or workplace and opens a case. Each case is different depending on the needs of the client, and the counselor or teacher tailors their service to the individual's needs.

Referring a person to the Department is easy. To be eligible for services, a person must be a resident of Iowa and have at least a functional loss of

vision, meaning that one's vision has deteriorated to a point where it is affecting his or her daily life. Since the Department is a state agency, funded by state and federal dollars, services are free to Iowans. The Department's services are intended as rehabilitation to promote independence and confidence. While a person may continue to seek medical care to slow or reverse the progress of vision loss, the Department offers methods to cope with that vision loss to help that person live as full a life as possible.

Linda on the left talking with a VR counselor, Toni Reimers, and another orientation center student outside of the IDB building.



Article submitted by:  
Shoshana Hebshi, IA Dept. for the Blind

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Please contact the Iowa Department for the Blind with any questions about our services, how to submit a referral, to take a tour of our building and meet staff and clients or to have a staff member speak to your group. Call us toll free within Iowa at (800) 362-2587 or e-mail us at [information@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:information@blind.state.ia.us). Our web address is [www.IDBOnline.org](http://www.IDBOnline.org).

## Thank you to the IAO Congressional Advocates

The state societies were asked by the AAO to identify a Congressional Advocate Coordinator for their state. Michael Scott, MD, from Medical Associates in Dubuque, agreed to fill that position.

The IAO leadership worked with Dr. Scott to identify advocates for each of our Federal Legislators. Serving in these positions are:

Beth Bruening, MD, Bruening Eye Care

Christopher Haupert, MD, Iowa Retina Consultants

Jared Nielsen, MD, Wolfe Clinic

Jeff Maassen, MD, Iowa Eye

Brandt Riley, DO, North Iowa Eye Clinic

Michael Scott, MD, Medical Associates

Jeffrienne Young, MD, Physician Eye Clinic

Dr. Scott will contact these advocates when action is needed and they will likely contact you! This is a great program, but all of you need to be advocates as well. Because advocacy is not nearly as effective if it only happens when you need something, the AAO and IAO encourage you to establish relationships with your elected representatives. They need to know you are the eye doctors with the medical degree and that you know what is important when it comes to the vision of Iowans.

Thank you to all these advocates who have agreed to participate and thanks to all of you who will step up to the plate and advocate for your profession.

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## Upcoming Events

AAO Mid Year Forum/Congressional Advocacy Day  
April 6-9, Washington, DC

Coding Seminar with Joy Newby  
March 23, Iowa City

Nurse/Technician Meeting  
April 30, Des Moines

For more information, go to the Meetings and Events Page  
of our website, [IowaEyeDocs.org](http://IowaEyeDocs.org).