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Free Vision Screening Scheduled For World Glaucoma Day

BALTIMORE, MD (March 12, 2010) – Baltimore City will honor World Glaucoma Day on Saturday, March 13, with a free vision screening for residents as part of The Eyes Have It Program, an ongoing effort to fight glaucoma.

The screening will take place from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Good Samaritan Hospital's main lobby, 5601 Loch Raven Blvd. No advanced appointment is necessary, and there is no cost for admission. Residents without medical insurance who are found to be in need of further glaucoma treatment will be referred to available resources.

Created in January 2008, The Eyes Have It Program assists in creating awareness of glaucoma and offers free screenings to the citizens of Baltimore. Through Dec. 31, volunteer physicians have screened 761 individuals for glaucoma. Of those, 136 individuals – or 18 percent – were referred for glaucoma treatment. In addition, 132 individuals were referred for additional vision treatment.

More than 70 million people worldwide are affected by glaucoma. Because there often are no warning signs, less than half of the estimated 3,000,000 people in the United States with glaucoma are aware they have the disease. There is no cure, but the condition is treatable if detected early.

“Half of all blindness in this urban population is probably preventable,” said Samuel R. Polakoff, M.D., chairman of The Polakoff Foundation. “This is why it is critical to provide screening and education to people before glaucoma robs them of their sight. We’ve made great strides with this campaign, but there is much more work to be done.”

The Eyes Have It Program partners include the Baltimore City Health Department, The Polakoff Foundation, The Maryland Society for Sight, Maryland Optometric Association (MOA), Glaucoma Research Foundation, Anne Arundel Eye Center, and Krieger Eye Institute at Sinai Hospital. Future clinic dates are listed on the Baltimore City Health Department's Website: <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.

High-risk groups for glaucoma include those with a family history of glaucoma, those age 60 and older, African-Americans over age 40, people of Hispanic origin, and diabetics.

For more information about glaucoma, The Eyes Have It Program, and physician volunteer opportunities, visit www.fightglaucoma.org.

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