



ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES OF OPTOMETRY

6110 Executive Blvd.
Suite 420
Rockville, MD 20852
301.231.5944

www.opted.org



American Optometric Association

243 N. Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63141
800.365.2219


www.aoa.org



**“Today I
added 100
points to
a young
player’s
batting
average.”**

**That’s what
optometrists
do.**

ASCO | Association
of Schools and Colleges
of Optometry

A close-up photograph of a robin perched on the red handle of a garden tool. The robin has a bright orange-red breast and a greyish-brown head. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage.

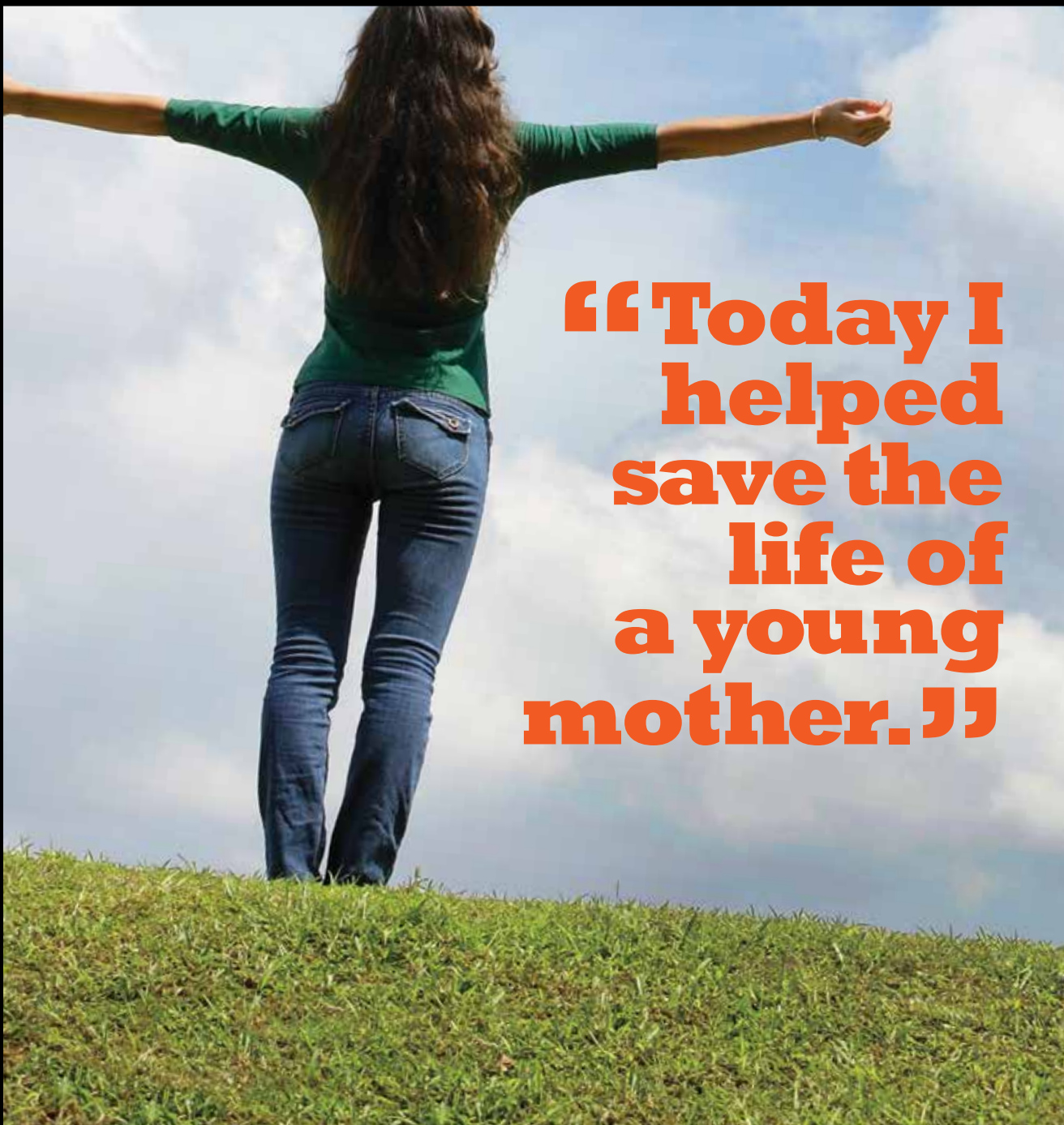
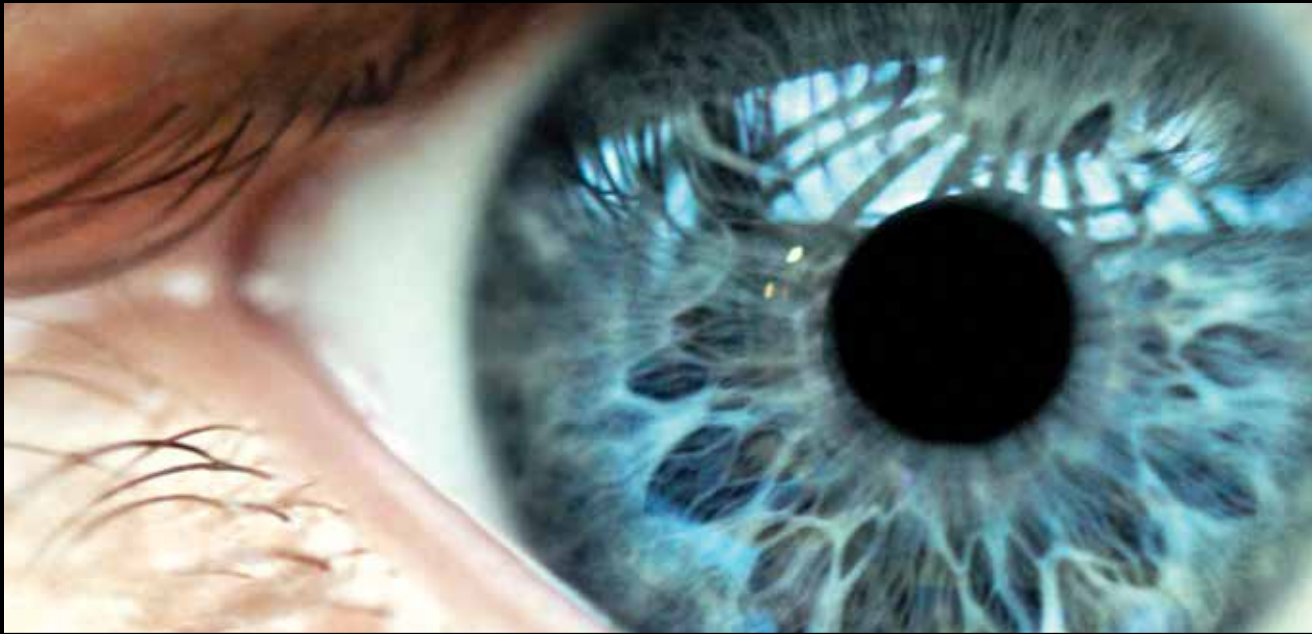
“Today I returned the joy of bird watching to a homebound senior.”

Advanced vision loss had robbed an elderly woman of a treasured pastime: watching birds from her picture window. With adaptive visual aids prescribed by her optometrist, she now enjoys a brighter outlook on life.

What do optometrists do?

Some people will tell you that doctors of optometry diagnose and treat disorders of the eye. We say that’s only part of the story. What optometrists really do—each and every day—is make a real difference in real lives.

Optometrists reveal new vistas, return lost joys, empower greater achievement, and preserve unlived lives. **That’s what optometrists do.**



“Today I helped save the life of a young mother.”

We see the whole patient.

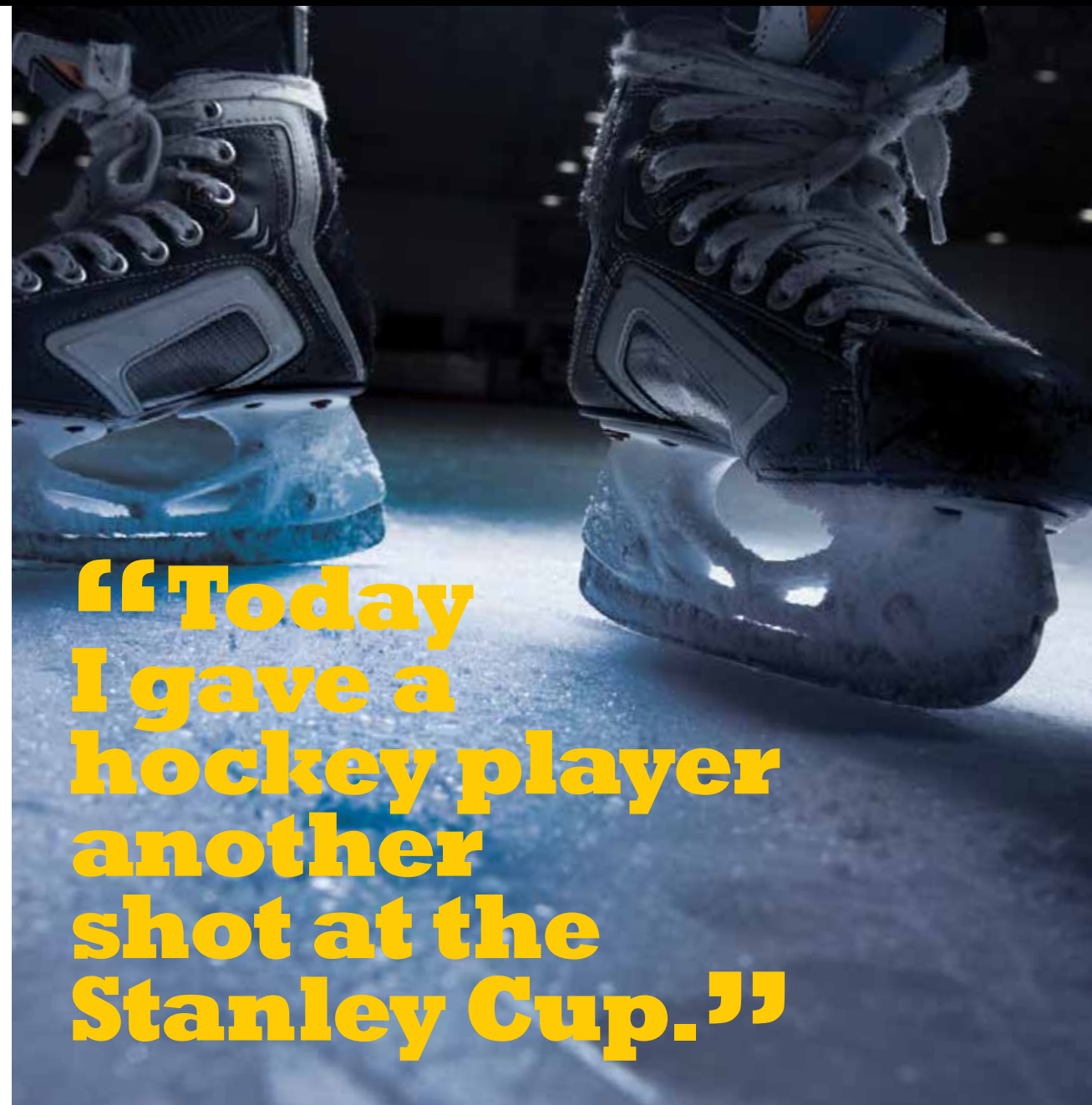
Devastated by the loss of a child in the sixth month of pregnancy, a young mother came to her optometrist complaining of double vision. For months, health care providers had dismissed her complaint, attributing it to stress and bereavement. As the optometrist sat chatting with her patient, she noticed that the woman's right eye bulged slightly and its movement to the right was severely restricted. Suspecting some kind of mass, the optometrist immediately ordered imaging tests, which revealed a brain tumor behind her right eye. The tumor was removed, along with a portion of bone, and reconstructive surgery followed. Grateful to be alive, this 37-year-old mother of two greets her optometrist with a hug at every appointment.

SYSTEMIC DISEASE. As primary-care providers, doctors of optometry are trained in general health issues and are often the first to detect diseases, from diabetes and hypertension to stroke and tumors.

We make great feats possible.

Sidelined for a year and still not ready to return to the ice, the hockey pro was beginning to think his concussion was a career-ender. Despite the best medical care the league could offer, mysterious symptoms—including pressure behind the eyes, problems with balance and spatial awareness, and dizziness in open spaces and when rotating his head—lingered. A four-hour assessment by an optometrist traced the symptoms to concussion-related vision dysfunction. Over the course of four months, the player visited the optometrist for several extended, one-on-one vision therapy sessions; between visits, the optometrist monitored his patient's progress and modified his therapy through email, text, and video chat. With his vision function restored to its pre-concussion levels, not only did the defenseman strap on his skates next season, he also put in the best performance of his career, helping his team make it to the Stanley Cup® playoffs.

VISION THERAPY. Doctors of optometry in this area provide individualized treatment regimens to correct visual dysfunction, from “lazy eye” and “wandering eye” to disorders in focusing, moving, and teaming the eyes.



“Today I gave a hockey player another shot at the Stanley Cup.”



We care for kids and communities.

The young mother was shocked by the optometrist's news: her nine-month-old son had congenital cataracts. She hadn't suspected anything to be wrong with her baby's eyes, but only wanted to take advantage of a public health program offering free comprehensive eye assessments to infants in their first year of life. The optometrist reassured the anxious mother, counseled her on treatment, and provided follow-up care. Once the cataracts were removed, the boy's parents immediately noticed how intently he now stared at tiny details: the embroidery on his mother's sweater, the stubble on his father's chin. The baby's world—and his connection to his parents—had come into sharper focus.

PEDIATRIC OPTOMETRY. Doctors of optometry who focus on children's vision help to shape kids' healthy development, physically, academically, and socially.

COMMUNITY HEALTH OPTOMETRY. Through special programs such as InfantSEE®, a public health initiative of the American Optometric Association offering no-cost eye assessments to infants six to 12 months of age, optometrists have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of society.



“Today I showed a baby a world full of small wonders.”



We give to those who gave all.

The soldier's visual symptoms were typical of veterans recovering from traumatic brain injury sustained on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan: blurred vision, photosensitivity, and severe dry eyes. Through her work at a Veterans Affairs medical center, his doctor of optometry well knew that such residual symptoms are complex, multisensory, and often neurologically based. They also require the collaborative care of an interprofessional health care team. Over the course of several months, the optometrist worked closely with her colleagues on the wounded vet's care. Tinted corrective lenses addressed his photosensitivity, while scleral contact lenses, which buffer the eye with artificial tears, eased the discomfort from his extreme dry eyes. While the team continues to work with the veteran on his pain and frequent headaches, relief of his debilitating eye symptoms puts him one step closer to recovery.

MILITARY/VETERANS AFFAIRS

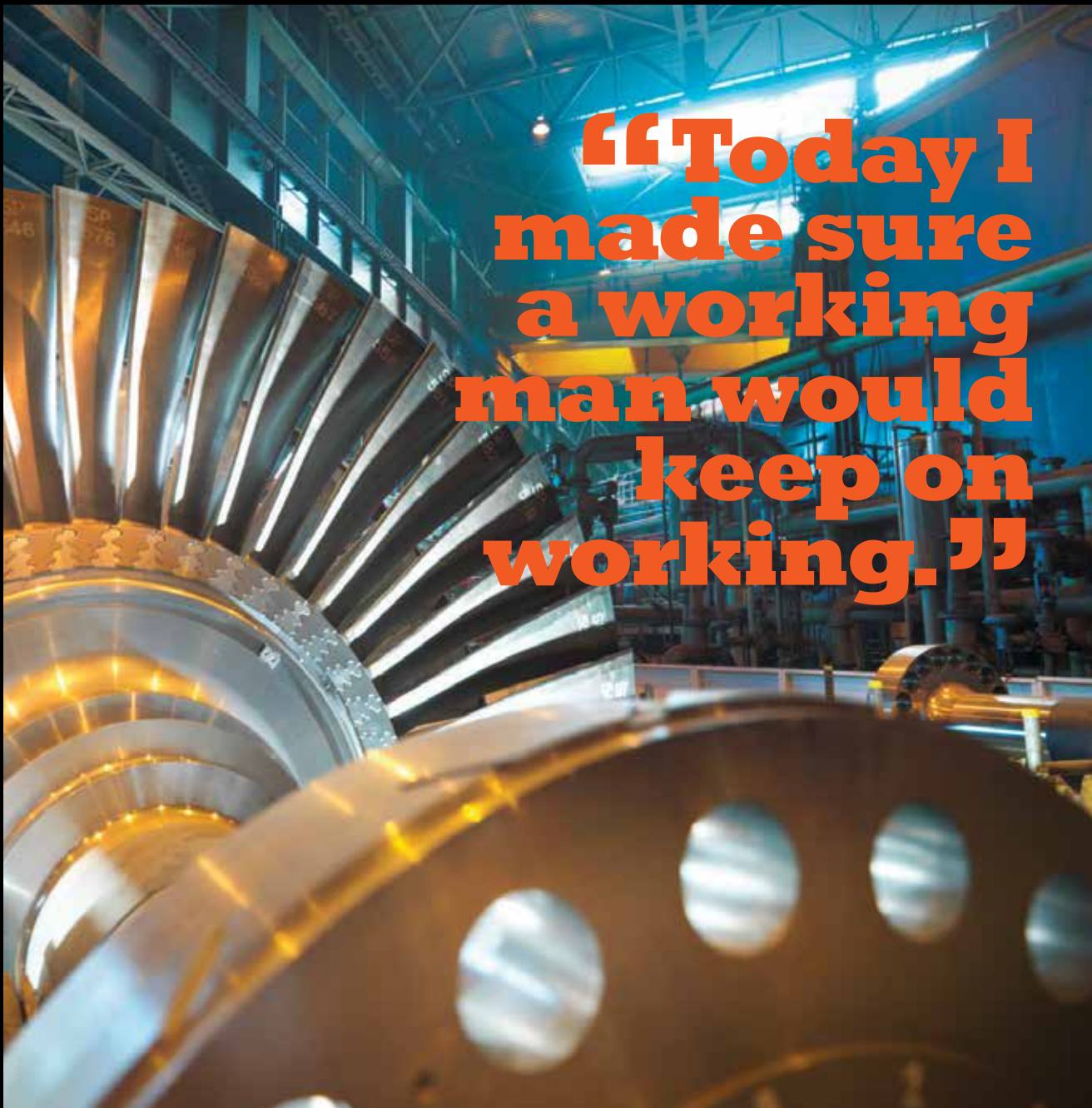
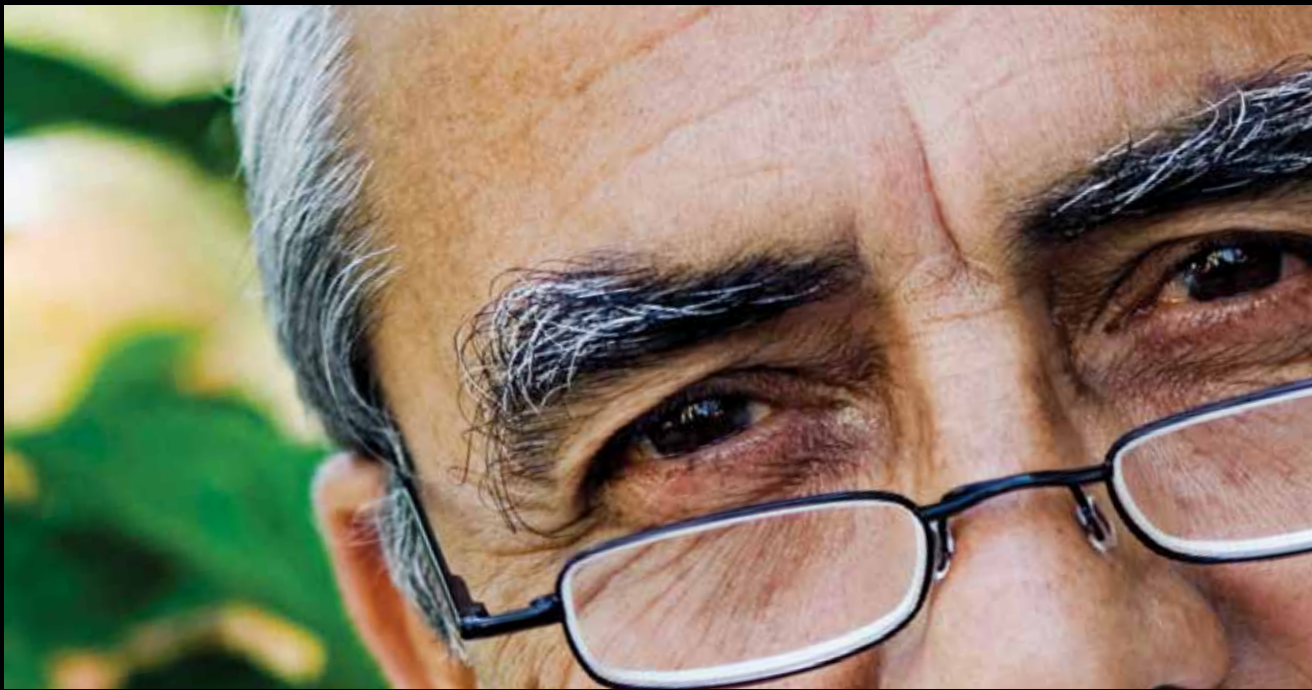
OPTOMETRY. Some doctors of optometry serve as active-duty officers with the military medical corps, while others care for the country's veterans at hundreds of Veterans Affairs sites nationwide.

INTERPROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE

TEAMS. Doctors of optometry collaborate with physicians and other health care professionals on an integrated approach to patient care, in settings such as clinics, hospitals, and specialized centers.



“Today I shortened a wounded warrior's road to recovery.”



“Today I made sure a working man would keep on working.”

We care for more than eyes.

Fearful of losing his livelihood, the heavy-machinery operator fought his fading eyesight with denial. By the time he finally sought care, glaucoma had left him too visually impaired to drive. The optometrist knew his 56-year-old patient needed more than medical therapy—he needed a new direction in life. Over the next three years, the optometrist guided his patient through the support system for the visually impaired—disability benefits, job-training programs, low-vision rehabilitation and education—while managing a therapeutic regimen that slowed the disease’s progression. With his new skills, this family man landed a different position within his company, and today welcomes the future with hope rather than fear.

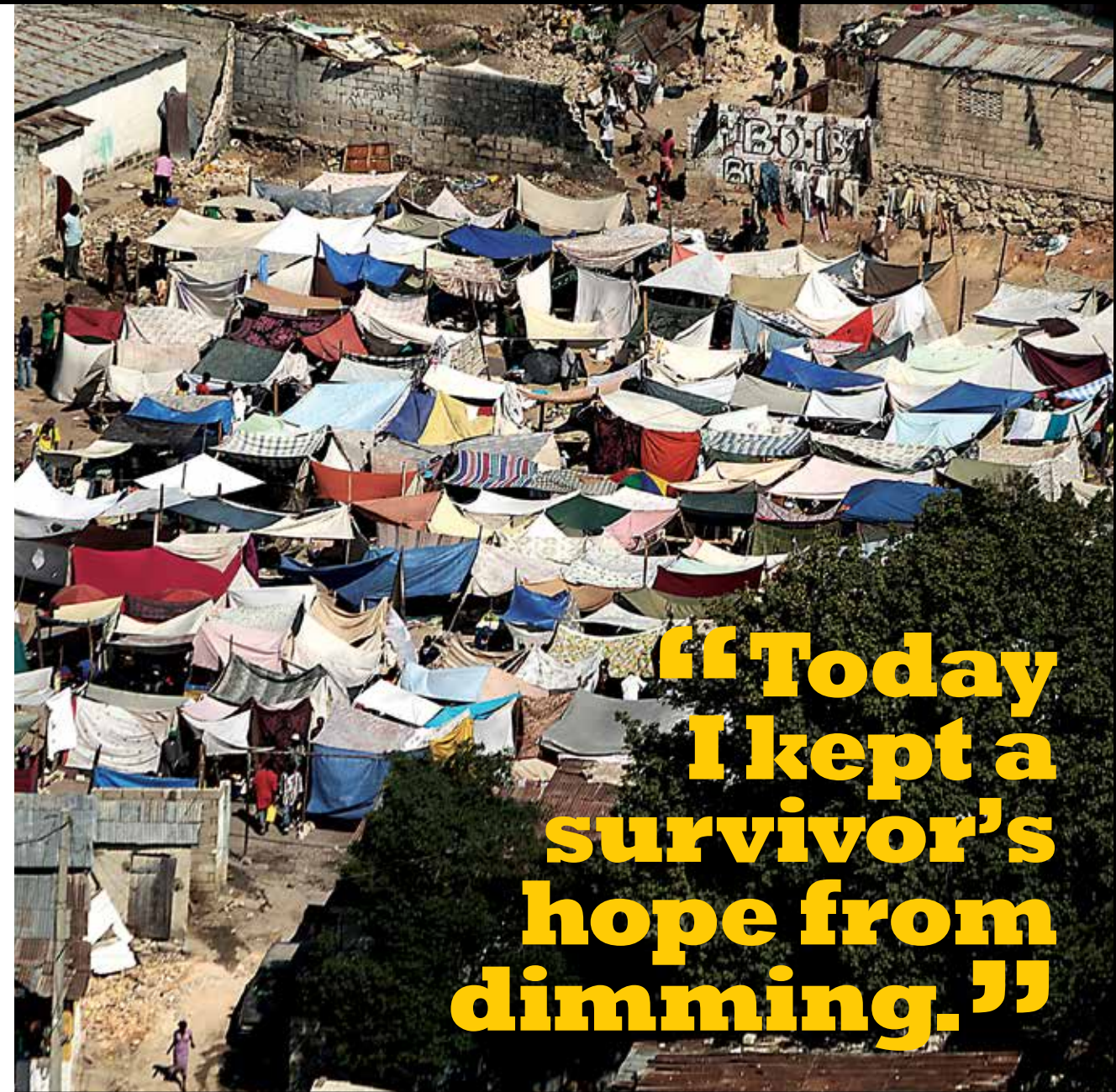
OCULAR DISEASE. Doctors of optometry protect patients’ vision by diagnosing and treating glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, and other diseases that damage the eyesight and may lead to blindness.

LOW-VISION REHABILITATION. Doctors of optometry in this area of emphasis work with patients whose vision can’t be corrected with regular glasses or contact lenses, helping them to attain greater independence through the use of adaptive visual aids such as magnifiers, telescopes, and other devices.

We reach out to the world.

Within 12 hours of the massive earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010, leaving a quarter of a million people dead, the first medical team of foreign physicians arrived at a makeshift field hospital at the Port-au-Prince airport. Weeks later, a young optometrist joined the effort. From a tent pitched on a small runway, he screened hundreds of destitute survivors who were at risk of ocular infections. One patient, a young man, had developed severe bacterial conjunctivitis, which the optometrist quickly treated. Left undiagnosed, this simple infection could have led to blindness—compounding the tragedy for a victim who had already undergone reconstructive surgery after his eye and facial bones were partially crushed in the earthquake.

MISSION TRIPS. Through humanitarian initiatives around the world, optometrists are often the most in-demand medical volunteers, offering both skills in primary care and expertise in eye disorders to fragile communities with limited access to health care.



“Today I kept a survivor’s hope from dimming.”



Real lives. Real impact. That's why we do it.

Doctors of optometry are the primary-care doctors of the eye and the frontline protectors of vision—our most valued sense. In ways big and small, day out and day in, doctors of optometry make a real difference in the lives of their patients. Vision corrected. Blindness prevented. Diseases averted. Lives changed. That's what optometrists do.

As a doctor of optometry, you will do well for yourself while doing much for others. A career in optometry lets you:

Ensure a secure future. You can expect a good income and a solid employment picture. The demand for optometric services will only grow as the population

Balance work with life. You can balance a challenging primary-care profession with a rewarding family life—just ask an optometrist. Optometry's unique suite of advantages—including multiple career pathways, regular practice hours, and a pleasant work environment (patients who enjoy their visits, for one!)—makes it one of health care's most flexible professions. In fact, optometrists enjoy an average work week of 37.3 hours, according to an American Optometric Association survey.

Enjoy a respected profession. You can have the status of a highly skilled primary-care doctor, while building compassionate, long-lasting relationships with your patients. Optometry requires the kind of personal interaction—asking questions, listening to concerns, discussing options—on which meaningful doctor-patient partnerships are formed.

Start now. Start here. Here's how you do it.

Earn the right degree. Only one degree qualifies you to become an optometrist: the doctor of optometry (OD), a four-year, doctoral-level degree. This means that doctors of optometry spend the same amount of time in professional school as medical doctors and dentists but are not required to complete residency training to practice. (Residency training is an option in a number of optometric practice areas.)

33%

Optometry far outpaces the average for all occupations in employment growth.

While concentrating primarily on structure, function, and disorders of the eye, students of optometry also take courses in human anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology, among others, to prepare for their role as primary-care doctors protecting patients' overall health and wellness. Turn the page for a list of U.S. schools and colleges offering the doctor of optometry degree.

Pursue the right coursework. Aspiring optometrists should complete a bachelor's degree and build a strong background in the sciences, preferably at a four-year college or university with a rigorous academic program. Optometry school is demanding, and admission is competitive. The best candidates pursue pre-professional level science courses that are designed for science majors and health professions students. Just like an aspiring medical school applicant, you should obtain laboratory experience and study such science disciplines as biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, general physics, and microbiology. Consult with your pre-health adviser or an admission counselor from any optometry school or college for specific guidance.

Get the right exposure. Now's the time for a firsthand look at the health care professions. Visit your optometrist and ask questions. Shadow an optometrist as he or she cares for patients and runs a practice. Real-world experience will tell you if optometry is the right career for you.

Optometry offers an average

\$129K

net income of
\$129,385 across
the profession.

As highly educated experts of the eye, doctors of optometry preserve ocular health and diagnose, treat, and manage disorders that affect the eye or vision. An optometrist's day is filled with a challenging and varied array of care, from prescribing glasses and contact lenses, to treating diseases such as glaucoma and retinopathy, to performing minor surgical procedures and providing pre- and post-operative care to patients undergoing ophthalmologic surgery. Patients leave their optometrist's office with a smile and a brighter focus—the greatest of the profession's many rewards.

As primary-care providers, doctors of optometry are educated, just as other physicians are, in general health and systemic disease. Optometrists are often the first to detect critical health issues—from diabetes to hypertension, from stroke to cancer—and refer their patients for timely treatment. Optometrists therefore enjoy the dual satisfaction of having the specialized knowledge to manage their patients' eye health as well as the medical education to protect their overall wellness.

ages and the need for eye and vision care increases. In fact, employment in optometry is projected to grow by 33% through 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Optometrists also enjoy a competitive salary with impressive room for growth. Data from the American Optometric Association shows average net incomes ranging from \$129,385 for all optometrists to \$203,230 for owners of group practices.

Pursue unlimited options. You can practice in city, suburban, or rural communities. You can run your own solo practice or join a group practice. You can work independently or pursue employment in clinical, academic, or other settings. You can serve in the military, government, or public health sectors. You can pursue many specialty practices, from pediatrics or geriatrics to sports vision or rehabilitative vision. Optometry is a profession that adapts to life's changing responsibilities and opportunities.

Schools and Colleges of Optometry

These schools and colleges in the United States offer the doctor of optometry (OD), the four-year, doctoral-level degree needed for licensure as an optometrist. For the most up-to-date list, visit the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry at www.opted.org.

Illinois College of Optometry
Chicago, Illinois
www.ico.edu

Indiana University School of Optometry
Bloomington, Indiana
www.opt.indiana.edu

Inter American University of Puerto Rico
School of Optometry
Bayamón, Puerto Rico
www.optonet.inter.edu

MCPHS University School of Optometry
Worcester, Massachusetts
www.mcphs.edu/academics/schools/school-of-optometry

Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University
Big Rapids, Michigan
www.ferris.edu/mco

New England College of Optometry
Boston, Massachusetts
www.neco.edu

Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
optometry.nova.edu

The Ohio State University College of Optometry
Columbus, Ohio
optometry.osu.edu

Oklahoma College of Optometry at Northeastern State University
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
optometry.nsuok.edu

Pacific University College of Optometry
Forest Grove, Oregon
www.pacificu.edu/optometry

Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania
www.salus.edu/optometry

Southern California College of Optometry at Marshall B. Ketchum University
Fullerton, California
www.scco.edu

Southern College of Optometry
Memphis, Tennessee
www.sco.edu

State University of New York State College of Optometry
New York, New York
www.sunyopt.edu

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry
Birmingham, Alabama
www.uab.edu/optometry



37.3 hours

The average work week of an optometrist allows an enviable work-life balance.

#12

Optometry ranks high on *CNNMoney's* list of America's 100 top jobs.

Midwestern University-Arizona College of Optometry
Glendale, Arizona
www.midwestern.edu/programs-and-admission/az-optometry

University of California, Berkeley
School of Optometry
Berkeley, California
optometry.berkeley.edu

University of Missouri–St. Louis College of Optometry
St. Louis, Missouri
www.umsl.edu/divisions/optometry

University of Houston College of Optometry
Houston, Texas
www.opt.uh.edu

University of the Incarnate Word Rosenberg School of Optometry
San Antonio, Texas
optometry.uiw.edu

Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry
Pomona, California
www.westernu.edu/optometry

Learn More About ...

Optometric Education. Discover the answers to all your questions about optometry school and learn about the Optometry Admission Test (OAT).

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
www.opted.org

Optometric Profession. Explore valuable resources and the latest news in optometry, with a special section exclusively for students.

American Optometric Association
www.aoa.org

Applying to Optometry School. Find out about the application process and preview—or submit!—the common application used by all U.S. optometry schools.

OptomCAS: Optometry Centralized Application Service
www.optomcas.org