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**MAKING VISION THERAPY VISIBLE: THANKS TO SYNERGY! • BY TONI BRISTOL**

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This has been a landmark year for making VT Visible. While this year marked one of the largest COVD meetings in history, there are many of you who were not able to attend my briefing at the meeting, so I thought I would share some of the highlights with you.

Synergy is the key to making VT visible. Synergy is the interaction of two or more agents or forces which when combined create an effect that is greater than the sum of the individual efforts. Simply put, our success is due to everybody working together.

While COVD is working on the Making VT Visible campaign, we also have a number of our members who are actively working on getting the word out through their personal blogs, books they've published, articles, speaking engagements, TV appearances and much more. The key here is that we're all working together.

For instance, in December 2010 one of our COVD members, Dr. Kimberly Walker, contacted COVD because a patient of hers was a writer for AOL Health. I coordinated with the writer and we got an excellent piece that went online Dec. 26th.

The AOA has fully embraced 3D vision, binocular vision, and vision therapy and has included COVD in many of their PR efforts. A special thanks to Drs. Leonard Press and Dominick Maino for all they've done in this area. I announced AOA's new website, [www.3deyehealth.org](http://www.3deyehealth.org), in *VISIONS*, May 2011 – Volume 41, Issue 3. The AOA continues to list COVD as a resource in all of the press releases that talk about 3D vision.

The AOA launched their first School Readiness Summit this spring. Some of the organizations in attendance included: American Federation of Teachers, American Public Health Association, Council for Exceptional Children, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Based Health Clinics, National Association of School Nurses, National Education Association's Health Information Network, National Head Start Association. Two of the guest speakers were Dr. Susan Barry and Mrs. Robin Benoit, both of whom shared how vision therapy changed their lives.

Following is a quick excerpt from a press release that was issued by the president of the AFT as a result of the School Readiness Summit: "Even the most gifted students will struggle academically, if they have trouble seeing the blackboard, or focusing on a book. A tremendous amount of learning happens visually, so proper vision care is crucial to helping students reach their full potential."

At the bottom of this press release is a link to a page on the AFT website titled "Linking Children's Health to

Education." This page has a section on vision, which includes a link to COVD Fellow, Dr. Larry Lampert's website. When I discovered that, I contacted Dr. Lampert, and he was kind enough to add to his page:

"If you are not in the Boca Raton or surrounding area, please visit the website for the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) for more information or to find a doctor near you. COVD is a non-profit 501(c)(3), international membership association of eye care professionals which offers optometrists and vision therapists the opportunity to become certified in vision development and vision therapy. Visit: [www.covd.org](http://www.covd.org)"

The press releases for the August is National Children's Vision & Learning month were specifically designed to address common questions parents ask and misconceptions about vision therapy. The releases include quotes from a parent, principal, special education director and even a pediatrician! If you have not read or used the COVD press releases, please download them and use them (<http://tinyurl.com/7rnbqzg>).

We have created a new page on the COVD website, Dyslexia & Vision. You can access this page by using the Vision Conditions quick link (located on the upper left hand side of the home page). This page includes a quote from pediatrician and parent advocate for the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Dr. Debra Walhof. Special thanks to COVD Fellow, Dr. Gabrielle W. Marshall for the connection with Dr. Walhof.

This year marked the first Visions of Hope video contest which was the brainchild of Dr. Nate Bonilla-Warford and Ruth Villeneuve, who is in charge of COVD's social media. The winning video, along with a host of other videos from parents, children, and adult patients acknowledging how vision therapy changed their lives is available in the Vision and Learning Month section of our website: <http://tinyurl.com/7zy94be>.

Please keep in mind, people are willing to step forward to speak about the benefits of optometric vision therapy when their lives have been changed for the better, so excellent outcomes plays a vital role in our PR campaign.

In closing, it's all of us working together that is getting this combined result of making vision therapy visible. Please watch your COVD email blasts for exciting news and opportunities to help your patients share their success on a national level.

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