

Honoring Tennessee Lions for Over Two Decades of Service



25 years ago, Dr. Denis O'Day, the chairman of Vanderbilt University's Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences, challenged the Lions of Tennessee to create a program focused on providing vision screenings to young children. Without a state mandated vision exam before beginning kindergarten, many children in Tennessee began their educational journeys at a disadvantage due to unrecognized vision problems. [Tennessee Lions Charities](#) was formed to address the challenge issued by Dr. O'Day.

Over the years, TLC worked with experts in the fields of ophthalmology and vision technology to create a standard for vision screenings unique to the TN Lions KidSight Outreach program. The Vanderbilt partnership strengthened over the years, and the KidSight Outreach program aided in continual studies of Amblyopia.

Local Lions volunteers coordinate, schedule and conduct screenings at daycare centers, kindergarten programs, preschools and other areas where children are regularly supervised. KidSight Outreach staff stays current with the latest developments in vision screening technology, and constantly trains volunteers to ensure that KidSight Outreach maintains the high standards set from the beginning. The data from KidSight Outreach screenings are received from the volunteers for professional

evaluation, cataloging, and oversight. KidSight Outreach staff then notifies parents and screening sites of the results, and children with potential vision problems are referred for a full exam. Once a referred child has been examined, exam results are forwarded to Vanderbilt for further analysis. The partnership with Vanderbilt is an essential aspect to the program's credibility.

Since answering the challenge to ensure that Tennessee's children do not begin their school careers with unrecognized vision problems, Tennessee Lions have provided free vision screenings to over **637,000** children. Of those screened, over **35,700** have been referred for full exams and treatment. The mother of one of those referred children writes, **"We had no idea at all he needed glasses. When we went to the appointment, I was just heartbroken when he couldn't read the letters on the wall. After he started wearing glasses his handwriting has improved and other fine motor skills. You have helped change his life and I am forever grateful."**

Continued dedication is essential to the Tennessee Lions KidSight Outreach program. Social media tributes to Tennessee Lions Clubs throughout 2020 highlight the vast impact each club continues to make. Maryville, West Knox, and Murfreesboro Noon Lions clubs demonstrate their longevity in the KidSight program while the new Sevier County Lions Club has taken on KidSight screening as their passion.

Starting in 1998, The **Maryville Lions Club** has been an important part of KidSight Outreach. Vision preservation is the club's primary focus. Members participate in eyeglass recycling, help individuals purchase eye glasses, and provide free vision screenings to the children in Blount County. With eight club members serving on the screening team, screenings are conducted in multiple locations at once with their many Plusoptix vision screeners. Plusoptix provides



objective results in less than a second. Refractive errors such as near and far sightedness as well as astigmatism, the difference in need for glasses between the eyes, strabismus, and anisocoria can all be determined with a simple screening in the form of a photo. Club members screen in preschools, daycare centers, Head Starts, and the school systems in a three county area. Like many clubs, Maryville is also now helping conduct screenings in the schools at specific grade intervals. The Plusoptix makes it easy to refer for refractive error, allowing the Lions to refer children who need glasses.

For more than a decade, the Maryville Lions Club has been one of the top screening clubs in Tennessee. Screening more than 1,700 children in 2019 earned the club a place in the Top Ten clubs for the year. The Maryville Lions Club has screened 17,913 children in the last decade. The Club has set a 2020 goal of beating last year's number of children screened.



The West Knox Lions Club has participated in the KidSight Outreach program for over 20 years, consistently screening numbers in the state's top ten clubs. Ronald Welch, the West Knox Lions Club KidSight Chair, explained that the West Knox Lions Club began conducting screenings with the older MTI instrument which produced physical Polaroid photos for interpretation. The Club has kept current with the advances in vision screening technology over their decades of service and currently use the Plusoptix vision screening instrument which is much less invasive, fast, and easy to use.

Ronald expressed that the KidSight Outreach vision screening program is important to the West Knox Lions Club because they know that early detection of vision problems is imperative to making sure that children have a chance to succeed when they begin their educational journeys.

The West Knox Lions club has always been a leader in the KidSight Outreach vision screening program. In the last decade their members have screened more than 29,000 children. Their KidSight Outreach team screened over 2,300 children last year, and they have set a screening goal for 2020 to screen at least 2,500 children.

Murfreesboro Noon Lions Club has been conducting screenings for the KidSight Outreach program for more than 20 years and is also one of the top 10 screening clubs in the state.

Taking the KidSight program seriously, their efforts helped to ensure that over 3,000 children were screened in their community in 2019. They have screened over 27,000 since 2013.



Their plans for the 2020 screening year are to screen between 4,000 & 5,000 children. Gene Staats, age 82, has been screening for over 20 years. He shared three stories from the KidSight Outreach vision screenings that have stuck with him and serve as motivation for his club.

“During a screening session we discovered a small child that couldn't even see the milk on his lunch tray. The Lions Club got him to the eye doctor and got him a pair of glasses. His mother said the first time they went to Wal-Mart after that he really kept her moving. He was so excited to see all the things he didn't know before. His mother had no idea he could not see.”

“In a screening session we found a little girl that could not see. Once she got her glasses she told her Teacher, ‘I knew there were trees but I didn't know they had leaves.’”

“We had a screening session where we found a little girl who needed glasses. Her Father was a school Principal and her Mother was a Teacher, they had no idea their child could not see.”

The Sevier County Lions Club, Chartered in April of 2017, began conducting KidSight Outreach screenings in September of 2017 and have already made an impact in their community. Seven club members screened 162 children in 2019. To the Sevier County Lions Club, KidSight Outreach is an opportunity to

identify potential vision problems and to network and grow their membership while serving as a philanthropic example to the children in their community.

The Sevier County Lions Club has lofty goals for the 2020 screening year. They plan to once again screen all of the Head Start classes in Sevier County, all of the Library preschool classes, and several of the local daycare facilities in Sevier County. They also hope to purchase their own Plusoptix screening instrument to widen their ability to conduct screenings.



Ten Tennessee Clubs are joining forces to submit a grant to Lions Clubs International Foundation for the purchase of a new Plusoptix vision screener for each of the clubs.



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We at Plusoptix are honored to be a part of the Lions vision screening programs. Through countless hours of dedication and service, your efforts make a life-changing difference in children.