

HEALTH

Eye Health for the Under-Served

Optometrist reaches out to help immigrant community

A north Portland optometrist has launched a program to fill a substantial need within Portland's immigrant and refugee community.

Dr. Summy To, owner of Myoptic Optometry and Modern Eyewear, 3978 N. Williams Ave., is starting an initiative to provide eye health screening and testing to residents served by the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, many of whom have never had their eyes examined.

Many IRCO clients are recent arrivals to America. Founded in 1976, the organization works to empower refugees and immigrants to become self-sufficient and long-term contributors to the economy and our multi-ethnic community.

In July, Myoptic Optometry set up exam facilities for the first time at IRCO headquarters in northeast Portland, and after gathering patient names, dates of birth and any medical histories, spent the morning conducting eye examinations.

The exams included an overall eye health preventive assessment, basic checks of visual acuity at a distance and near, checks of muscle teaming and examination of the retina to screen for glaucoma.

"The vision screenings allow us to identify vision impairments that could be signs of more serious eye disease. Beyond that, we are performing dilated exams to evaluate ocular health, as well," said Dr. To.

In the past, new arrivals to IRCO went through preliminary general health screening, but no vision or thorough eye testing was con-



North Portland optometrist Summy To provides a preliminary health screening to under-served patients during a recent visit to the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) in northeast Portland.

ducted.

"We do our best to provide as much assistance as possible for people in transition into life in the U.S. and here in Portland," said an IRCO representative; "but the resources are simply not enough to do as much as we would like or to do or to be as thorough as we would like to be."

In the course of the recent vision screenings, Dr. To would look for any visual impairment or eye diseases and schedule time for patients to receive a more comprehensive exam in her offices, free of charge.

"As we launch this new initiative, dedicating our time and resources to it, we're also hoping other eye health professionals will step-up to join us," said Dr. To. "It's my belief there are many eye health professionals out there who would love the opportunity to be involved in this, if they were only

aware of it. And, should we diagnose more serious or extensive health issues outside the scope of our own practice, we will definitely need the resources of other eye and medical experts help us treat those conditions."

Dr. To pointed to the fact that the majority of those passing through the doors of IRCO are without health insurance or have inadequate insurance that does not cover eye care.

"For that reason," said Dr. To, "We're also asking the public to step-up to make financial contributions to a special eye health fund we're setting up with IRCO to cover the cost of glasses, eye treatments and even surgery, if necessary."

People can contribute by visiting the IRCO.org website and following steps to make a financial gift, or they can call IRCO at 503-234-1541 and ask about the IRCO Client Eye

Health Fund specifically.

"It's always been foundational for us to be involved in our community," explained Dr. To, "and

we've wanted to find a way to do more. We've found a need here and we're taking an initial step to help."

Festival Promotes Healthy Food

OMSI will host a one-of-a-kind, free, bilingual festival that explores the life cycle of food -- from farm to table and beyond.

The museum's inaugural Dirt to Dinner event will take place on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 4 and 5, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and highlight activities and organizations that support sustainable food choices.

Dirt to Dinner will help families learn more about the different stages of food -- where it comes from and how it gets there. Hands-on activities will teach families how to make more sustainable decisions about their food -- economically, environmentally and socially. The event will highlight skills such as sustainable shop-

ping, food preparation, gardening, food waste management and food preservation.

"With Dirt to Dinner, we are working with a number of local and regional partners to show visitors easy ways to positively impact their health, pocketbook and the environment," said OMSI Events Manager Andrea Middleton.

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