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## See to Read!

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# See to Read!

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and

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OLA Lobbyist



JANE CORRY

I have been a youth services librarian at Multnomah County Library since 1997 when I graduated from Emporia State University. As Past President of OLA, I have been thrilled to work with the See to Read folks.



NAN HEIM

Nan has been OLA's lobbyist in Salem for over twenty years. Her lobbying firm, Nan Heim/Associates, also represents the state association for ophthalmologists in Oregon. The ophthalmologists strongly supported the Children's Vision Screening Act in the State Legislature and Nan lobbied for its passage. She is excited that two of her long-time clients are actively helping Oregon's children see to read.



## What is See to Read?

- A series of free vision screenings for children at public libraries throughout Oregon.
- A campaign based on the belief that no child should begin learning to read with an undetected vision problem.
- A community service project that helps children be ready to read and that links families, schools, local service clubs, and legislators to public libraries.

## How Did See to Read begin?

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 3000, the Children's Vision Screening Act, requiring all children entering public school kindergarten to have a vision screening.

As the lobbyist for the Oregon Academy of Ophthalmology, Nan worked in support of this legislation. Joannah Vaughn, director of children's vision screening at Oregon Health



and Science University's Elks Children's Eye Clinic, also supported the legislation. She and her staff were already screening several thousand children at Head Start programs every year. One day at the Capitol, she and Nan were discussing how to get thousands of more children screened each year. Joannah had an idea.

"Don't you represent the Oregon Library Association?" she asked. "Public libraries would be a great place to have children's vision screenings. If libraries provide the space, we'll provide the staff to do free children's vision screenings!"

Since then, the OLA Board has endorsed free children's vision screenings as a project for public library participation. Pam North and Jane Corry have met with the Clinic staff at OHSU. And See to Read has become a reality.

### **How Does See to Read work?**

A public library director or children's librarian schedules an event with the See to Read staff by going to [www.seetoread.net](http://www.seetoread.net) and clicking on any one of three links: For Librarians, Calendar, or Contact.

There is no cost to the library, other than providing space for the screenings and publicizing the event. See to Read staff provide a press kit to help publicize the screenings.

On the scheduled day, trained screeners from the Elks Children's Eye Clinic and the Oregon Lions Foundation come to the library to administer the screenings.

Screenings are FREE, and parents receive the appropriate form to give to the school to prove their children have been screened, as required by state law.



Photo courtesy of the Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health and Science University.



As OLA lobbyist, Nan keeps track of See to Read screening events and notifies local legislators, so they are aware of public library participation. “It’s wonderful that public libraries are helping implement the vision screening law,” one legislator emailed recently. “Tell them thank you!”

### **What if a Child’s Screening Detects a Problem?**

The trained screeners indicate that a follow-up exam is needed and provide a list of local health care providers who can do the exam.

### **Why is Vision Screening Important for Preschool Children?**

Approximately 15 percent of preschool children have a vision problem that needs treatment. A vision problem that goes undetected and untreated can seriously impair a child’s ability to learn to read.

Amblyopia, known as “lazy eye,” is a particular concern for preschoolers. Amblyopia can cause permanent vision loss before a child turns seven, so school-aged vision screening may be too late.

\* \* \*

In 2015, 1,646 children were screened at 62 See to Read screening events in libraries throughout Oregon. We are making progress, but many more children need screenings. If your library has not scheduled a See to Read screening, please visit [www.seetoread.net](http://www.seetoread.net) and sign up today. You’ll truly be helping young children become readers! 📖



Jane Corry, OLA Past President, and Cheryl Thornton, Elks Vision Screening Program, OHSU, presented a poster about See to Read at the OLA Conference 2016 in Bend, Oregon.

