

# CORPORATE OPTOMETRIST™

The Voice of Corporate Optometry™

Toseef  
Hasan,  
OD

**Clear vision,  
smart savings.**  
Contacts available here & at [Walmartcontacts.com](http://Walmartcontacts.com)



## Ortho-K, All Day, Every Day



- Bridging The Gap
- Protecting the Future
- 2025 Southeast Regional Conference Recap

# AACO™

American Association of Corporate Optometrists™

# the most affordable monthly lens at Walmart



**outstanding comfort  
throughout the day  
and month**



**consistently  
clear vision\***



**maintains 95% of its  
moisture for 16 hours<sup>1</sup>**

**prescribe eureka!™ monthly lenses to your patients,  
exclusively available at Walmart Vision Centers**

\*Results from clinical studies of nesofilcon A daily disposable and samfilcon A monthly replacement contact lenses.

REFERENCE: 1. Walmart Private Label Team, data on file.

©2025 Walmart Stores Inc. or its affiliates. PRL.0034.USA.25

**eureka!™**



## COVER STORY

### 22 Ortho-K, All Day, Every Day

## + Practice Marketing

- 12 Digital Marketing Solutions to Help Optometrists Level Up

## + AACO Member Profile

- 16 Coming Full Circle: How AACO Helped Me Build a Thriving Optometry Practice After Military Service

## + Practice Insights

- 19 Why I Recommend eureka!™ Daily Lenses to My Patients

## + Pediatric Optometry

- 32 Protecting the Future: Prioritizing Children's Eye Health and Safety

## + Industry News

- 37 The Optometry Family Gathers in Minnesota



## + Departments

- 05 Editor-in-Chief's Letter: Connect with Your Patients — and Your Profession
- 07 President's Letter: Summer is in Full Swing at AACO
- 07 *Corporate Optometrist* Advisory Board
- 08 Coding Conundrums: Credentialing for Medical Insurance and Routine Vision Plans
- 33 2025 Southeast Regional Conference Recap
- 35 Continuing Education: Tips for Reporting Courses to ARBO and CE Broker
- 41 From the Executive Director: Welcome to the Peg Board!
- 42 AACO Board of Directors 2024

## SPECIAL ISSUE:

- 20 Bridging the Gap: How Digital Advertising is Helping Drive Patient Awareness for Eye Care
- 21 Comfort and Design — eureka!™ for Astigmatism: Where Innovation, Stability, and Affordability Meet

**Mission Statement:** To provide technical and professional education, practice resources, and tools for corporate-affiliated practitioners so they may provide the highest-quality care to their patients. Engagement. Inspiration. Education. Unity.

## PUBLICATION STAFF

### AACO Office

Peg Densmore, Executive Director  
306 Riveredge Drive, Ellijay, GA 30536  
peg@aacoeyes.org  
(770) 815-4519

### Editor-In-Chief

Douglas C. Melzer, OD, Dipl. ABO  
editor@aacoeyes.org

### Associate Editor

Carla Gavilanes Gasparini, OD  
info@aacoeyes.org

### Managing Editor

Peg Densmore  
peg@aacoeyes.org

### Contributing Editor

Melanie Clemmons, OD  
info@aacoeyes.org

### Design and Production

Picante Creative

### AACO Magazine Committee

Carla Gavilanes Gasparini, OD — Chair  
Tenesha Bazemore, OD  
Eric Botts, OD  
Jacqueline Pierre, OD, FAAO, FACHE  
John Womack, OD

### Magazine Advisory Board

Naheed Ahmad, OD, *Walmart*  
Jennifer Bodley, OD, *Target*  
Eric Botts, OD, *Walmart*  
Greg Caldwell, OD, FAAO, Dipl. ABO  
Joe W. DeLoach, OD, FAAO, Dipl. ABO, *Practice Compliance Solutions*  
Jennifer Geertz, OD, *Walmart*  
Kerry Gelb, OD, *LensCrafters*, *President, ALLDocs*  
Jeffrey Gerson, OD, FAAO  
H. Anthony Kwong, OD, FAAO, Dipl. ABO, *Sam's Club*  
Andre Lenoir, OD, *Walmart*  
Curtis Ono, OD  
Nikil Patel, OD, *Costco*  
Maria Sampalis, OD, *Warby Parker*, *Administrator Corporate Optometry Facebook Group*

*Corporate Optometrist*™ is published by the American Association of Corporate Optometrists (AACO). Copyright 2025 by AACO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any storage and retrieval systems, without the express written consent of the publisher. The publisher does not warrant, either expressly or by implication, the factual accuracy of articles, descriptions or opinions offered by authors of said articles or descriptions. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to AACO, 306 Riveredge Drive, Ellijay, GA 30536.



Come and join AACO in the  
*"Hostess City of the South"*



**2025** American Association of Corporate Optometrists (AACO)

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*Savannah, Georgia*

**AUGUST 22-23, 2025**

**HYATT REGENCY/SAVANNAH**

2 W Bay St, Savannah, GA 31401

*Keynote Speaker*

**Murray Fingeret, OD, FAAO**

**16+ hours COPE Credit\***

**GA Jurisprudence**

**FL Jurisprudence**

\* CE is COPE Accredited  
CE Broker Pending with FL/SC/TX

**AACO<sup>TM</sup>**

American Association of Corporate Optometrists<sup>TM</sup>



# Connect with Your Patients — and Your Profession

**Welcome** to another information-packed issue of *Corporate Optometrist Magazine*. It's an exciting time of year, as many of you may have been enjoying a vacation or getting some education at the 2025 Optometry's Meeting in Minneapolis, or perhaps getting ready to have a wonderful time in Savannah, GA, at the AACO Annual Conference. It's especially thrilling, though, for recent graduates from Optometry schools across the nation who have been actively preparing and testing for state licensing boards. It is to this last group that I send my warmest wishes and congratulations. Welcome to the Optometry family. It's a great group of people who are passionate about patient care and supportive of their profession and peers. Best wishes to you as you start your new career. May you make wise decisions and always remember that it is never too late to make changes, if you find yourself in the wrong community or practice situation, or practicing a specialty you no longer find as fulfilling. I know many peers who have reinvented themselves during their career, often more than once.

The point is, as you progress through your career, try to stay open to the depth and potential diversity of your training, and the varied manners in which you can practice. While Optometry has a long and proud history in the evaluation and prescribing of corrective lenses, we have continued to grow and evolve as a profession and now play an integral role in the health care of millions of patients. Our advancements in medical care have been hard-earned and well deserved — we have pushed for the advancement of our profession in the classroom and in legislatures, and quality of care is much improved as a result. However, since refractive care is the most common reason for patients to make an initial appointment, we must be careful not to neglect that aspect of our practice. Such seemingly routine appointments allow us to establish trusted relationships with our patients, which in turn allows us to be vigilant about their eye care over the years and make diagnoses that would otherwise be left to other professions.

Thanks to our allies at Bausch + Lomb, we devote this issue to the care and fitting of a large percentage of our profession's patients — the contact lens wearers. Contact lenses are an essential and core part of the services we provide, and in this issue Bausch + Lomb shares with us the advancements in materials, designs and fitting protocols of its latest products.

Additionally, this summer issue provides articles to help you with coding, the credentialing process (of particular importance to new ODs) and marketing your practice situation online. We also focus on children's vision care and offer an excellent example of a provider who reinvented herself mid-career, transitioning from a military OD to a new life as a practice owner.

Please enjoy! As always, we solicit your ideas and areas of interest for content. If you have a topic you would like to see addressed in the magazine, or a bit of insight you would like to share with your peers, please let us know how we can help make that happen by emailing us at [info@aacoeyes.org](mailto:info@aacoeyes.org). Have a great rest of your summer, and I hope to see you at the AACO Annual Conference in August.



**Douglas C. Melzer,  
OD, Dipl. ABO**

# Time to Join AAACO!

- Quality CE
- Discounts for Conferences, Products and Services
- Industry Updates Specific for the Corporate OD
- Networking with Other Corporate-Affiliated Colleagues
- Mentoring and Resource Programs

**1-YEAR  
MEMBERSHIP  
\$149**

*No-brainer!*



# AAACO™

American Association of Corporate Optometrists™

The Voice of Corporate Optometry™

**JOIN TODAY!**



**Visit [www.aacoeyes.org](http://www.aacoeyes.org) to apply for membership.**

# Summer is in Full Swing at AACO

**It's officially summer**, and kids will be going back to school before we know it. In the meantime, I hope all of you have a chance to unwind and relax! Here at AACO, our summer plans are well underway, rising to the crescendo of our big event: the 2025 AACO Annual Conference in beautiful and historic Savannah, GA, on August 22-23. We're all excited to explore Savannah's rich, diverse history with our colleagues and family, so please make plans to meet us there. Thanks to the invaluable support of our exhibitors, we will, as always, be able to bring together an elite group of thought leaders and experts, such as keynote speaker Dr. Murray Fingeret, for this year's meeting.

AACO is delighted to be partnering with Bausch + Lomb for the summer issue of *Corporate Optometrist*. As one of the world's premier eye health companies, Bausch + Lomb offers a wide range of contacts designed for various vision needs, including daily wear, extended-wear, multifocal and toric (for astigmatism) lenses. We hope you enjoy reading about their passion for innovative solutions and the latest in contact lens design.

Enjoy the warm weather, and we look forward to seeing you all in Savannah in August!

**Carla Gavilanes Gasparini**  
AACO President



## Corporate Optometrist™ Magazine Advisory Board

The advisory board for *Corporate Optometrist* magazine is made up of clinicians in both private and corporate Optometry practices, as well as key decision-makers. The advisory board gives critical advice, analysis and support for AACO's ongoing efforts in broadening corporate Optometry's impact.



Naheed Ahmad, OD  
Walmart



Jennifer Bodley, OD  
Target



Eric Botts, OD  
Walmart



Greg Caldwell, OD,  
FAAO, Dipl. ABO



Joe DeLoach, OD, FAAO,  
Dipl. ABO — Practice  
Compliance Solutions



Jennifer Geertz, OD  
Walmart



Kerry Gelb, OD  
Lenscrafters



Jeffrey Gerson,  
OD, FAAO



H. Anthony Kwong,  
OD, FAAO, Dipl. ABO  
Sam's Club



Andre Lenoir, OD  
Walmart



Curtis Ono, OD



Nikil Patel, OD  
Costco



Maria Sampalis, OD  
Warby Parker  
Founder, Corporate  
Optometry  
Facebook Group

# AACO™

American Association of Corporate Optometrists™

# Credentialing for Medical Insurance and Routine Vision Plans



Eric Botts, OD

**U**nless you're planning to work in a cash-only practice, you'll need to learn about the credentialing process as soon as you graduate from Optometry school, since cash flow for most successful practices is dependent on insurance and vision plan reimbursement. Let me start by emphasizing credentialing is neither an easy nor fast process,

especially given that most doctors want to be credentialed and eligible to see patients as soon as possible.

I also want to address the elephant in the room when it comes to credentialing: How can you see patients in an established practice before you're credentialed with a signed contract? Although with some providers like Medicare you can begin seeing



# Unless you're planning to work in a cash-only practice, you'll need to learn about the credentialing process as soon as you graduate from Optometry school.



patients *before* your contract is signed but after the start date established by the carrier, the catch is that you might not know exactly what that start date is until you sign your contract. The choice is ultimately yours as to when to begin seeing patients, but I strongly caution you not to start too early — if your established start date is postponed due to a holdup with your credentialing process, you may not be paid for exams conducted before that date. Also, it's important to point out that prior to completing the credentialing process, it is fraudulent to submit an exam to insurance utilizing the National Provider Identifier (NPI) or provider credentials of another doctor, unless that doctor examined the patient on the date of service.

## Starting the Process

When you begin the credentialing process, it's crucial to be consistent from the beginning — so be sure to decide on whether you want to be a sole proprietorship or corporation *before* you initiate the process. To make the best decision for your situation, I recommend consulting with a lawyer or accountant.

Before you submit your credentialing application, you must complete the following steps:

- Step 1: Apply for and receive your state optometric license.
- Step 2: Apply for and receive an individual NPI, which can be done at [npes.cms.hhs.gov](http://npes.cms.hhs.gov).
- Step 3: Apply for and receive a taxpayer identification number (TIN) at [www.federaltaxid.us](http://www.federaltaxid.us) and complete Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form CP 575.
- Step 4: If incorporating, apply for a group NPI after receiving a TIN.

**Note:** I recommend that you *always* set up a group NPI, even if you are a single-doctor practice. If you ever add a doctor to your practice without a group NPI in place, you will have to repeat the credentialing process for all carriers before you can add another

doctor to your group. And unfortunately, if you have to re-credential, there's no guarantee that the carrier will allow you on the panel (for example, the panel might be full and not accepting additional providers at that time).

The following is a list of required information and documentation (which should be accessible to you) to start the credentialing process:

- NPI
- Social Security number
- Signed W-9 form
- Voided check with the same exact name listed on IRS Form CP 575 (to set up a group)
- Name of Optometry school and year graduated
- Optometric license number and state
- Name and location of the practice you are joining or establishing
- Year your articles of incorporation were filed with the government
- IRS Form CP 575 with your legal business name and TIN
- *Note: All students must use the same name on their applications as on their Social Security cards.*

You must also provide proof of U.S. citizenship or a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) to apply to most panels. Other documents that might be required include:

- State controlled substance license
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Certificate
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) Certificate, if intending to perform laboratory tests
- Business license (in Illinois and some other states)

Some insurance carriers may require you to have a state controlled substance license and DEA Certificate to provide medical care in certain states.



## Medicare Considerations

When applying specifically for Medicare credentialing as one owner or multiple owners for a practice, you will need to submit the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 855I individual enrollment form for each provider, one CMS 855B enrollment form for the group practice, the CMS 588 EFT electronic funds transfer form and the CMS 460 participation agreement form. To join an existing practice, you must submit the 855I form, the 460 form and the CMS 855R form (which allows you to reassign benefits to another doctor or group practice).

Another consideration when you apply to be a Medicare provider is whether to be a participating or nonparticipating provider. Being a participating provider requires you to submit a claim for every Medicare patient, after which you will have to wait for reimbursement from Medicare. If you are a nonparticipating provider, on the other hand, you will submit a claim but are not required to accept assignment and may collect your allowed fee on the day of service. A participating provider receives 5% higher reimbursement from Medicare, and this is the recommended choice for most doctors who want to increase the number of Medicare patients they see.

You may apply to Medicare anytime you change locations, change ownership or practice under a new TIN. You can start seeing Medicare patients any time after your effective date, once it is approved by Medicare. After your application is approved and you have set up an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Agreement, you can submit claims for patients seen on or after your effective date. Additionally, some Medicaid and commercial medical administrators will allow you to backdate claims and see patients prior to your contract signing; however, vision plans typically will not allow backdating of claims, so you must wait until you have a signed contract to begin seeing patients.

A reminder for all current Medicare providers: You must revalidate every five years, when Medicare alerts you to do so. You also must revalidate separately for Railroad and durable medical equipment (DME) Medicare. Revalidation requires that you re-submit the 855I and/or 855B application and supporting documentation, plus your 588 EFT form and your 460 participation agreement. Your revalidation application must be submitted within the time frame listed in the revalidation letter, which you will receive directly from your Medicare administrator.

## Keep Your CAQH Info Updated

The Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH), a universal information service for many medical and routine insurance plans, can be found online at [caqh.org/solutions/caqh-proview](https://caqh.org/solutions/caqh-proview). You must maintain and update your CAQH information annually, or before attesting or applying for additional commercial panels, to expedite the application process. CAQH allows commercial carriers to obtain your information for the credentialing process, rather than having you submit your information on a more detailed application. This saves you valuable time during the application process, so be sure to upload all necessary documents prior to applying to commercial panels that utilize CAQH.

## Which Panels?

Deciding which panels to apply for is your choice to make. Medicare is a safe choice for most Optometrists, as it allows all doctors on the panel, and since Medicare beneficiaries live in almost every community. Medicaid is similar but reimburses at a lower rate in most (but not all) states. I suggest that you ask large employers in your community what plans they

provide their employees, keeping in mind that plans can — and often do — change each year on January 1. Check the websites of competing Optometrists in your area, as many doctors post the plans they accept. And be sure to review all contracts for routine vision plans before you sign up, to make sure they are a good choice financially for your practice.

As you can see, although the credentialing process is an onerous one, most doctors will have to tackle it in order to grow their practices.

**Dr. Botts** started his first practice in a Walmart Vision Center and has since opened three additional offices. He owns OBC, an insurance billing, credentialing and education company that helps providers navigate the complexities of patient insurance transactions.

# BACK-TO-SCHOOL JUST GOT GOOD

## GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN PRECISION®

Recommend the PRECISION® family of contact lenses for  
**16 hours of outstanding comfort and precise vision.<sup>1,2</sup>**



References: 1. Fogt J, Patton K. Long day wear experience with water surface daily disposable contact lenses. *Clin Optim*. 2022;14:93-99.  
2. In a 2-week prospective clinical study in the US, n=10; CLEAR CARE Cleaning & Disinfecting Solution used for cleaning and disinfection; Alcon data on file, 2023.  
Important information for PRECISION® (an Alcon A) contact lenses: For daily wear or extended wear up to 6 nights for near / farsightedness. Risk of serious eye problems (i.e., corneal ulcer) is greater for extended wear. In rare cases, loss of vision may result. Side effects like discomfort, mild burning, or stinging may occur.  
See product instructions for complete wear, care and safety information. 

© 2025 Alcon Inc. US-PRI-2500029

SCAN  
TO LEARN  
MORE



**Alcon**

# Digital Marketing Solutions to Help Optometrists Level Up



**Jennifer Ratliff,**  
Founder, *Level Up  
Prospecting LLC*

If seeing is believing, then the old adage is still correct: Your prospects have to know, like and trust you to become loyal, referring patients. In today's competitive health care arena, your digital landscape is defined by three keys: Knowing is Finding, Liking is Choosing and Trusting is Referring. Below are some proven strategies for Optometrists to level up their practices and ensure long-term success.

## Make It Easy for Patients to Find Your Business Online

If patients can't find you, they can't choose you. And if you don't stand out among the other top providers in your area, they aren't going to choose you first. Here are some important tips to help boost your online visibility:

**Optimized local search engine optimization (SEO)** helps people find your practice online. Google Business Profile and Apple Business Connect are the top two search engines for local providers, and map searches — specifically through Apple Maps and Google Maps — make up more than half of all searches for local providers.

**NAP consistency:** Ensure that your name, address and phone number (NAP) are consistent across all online platforms, from your own website to local directories.

**Local keywords:** Use location-based keywords such as "Optometrist in [City]" or "eye doctor near me" in your website's content to rank higher in local search results.

**Business profiles:** It's essential to claim and optimize your online business profiles, including accurate information such as your clinic's name, address, phone number, website and operating hours. Add high-quality photos or videos of your office and ensure that five-star patient reviews are showcased on these platforms:

- Google Business Profile
- Apple Maps
- Bing Places For Business



- Yelp
- Facebook Business Pages
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Siri
- Alexa

**Local directories for listings and citations:** There are hundreds of places to be listed and updated regularly. Use a management tool to level up your local reach and dominate your area.

## Make Sure Your Practice Stands Out as the First Choice

Visibility and credibility are the keys to being chosen. When your prospects like what they see, they'll often choose your practice first. Positive five-star reviews and

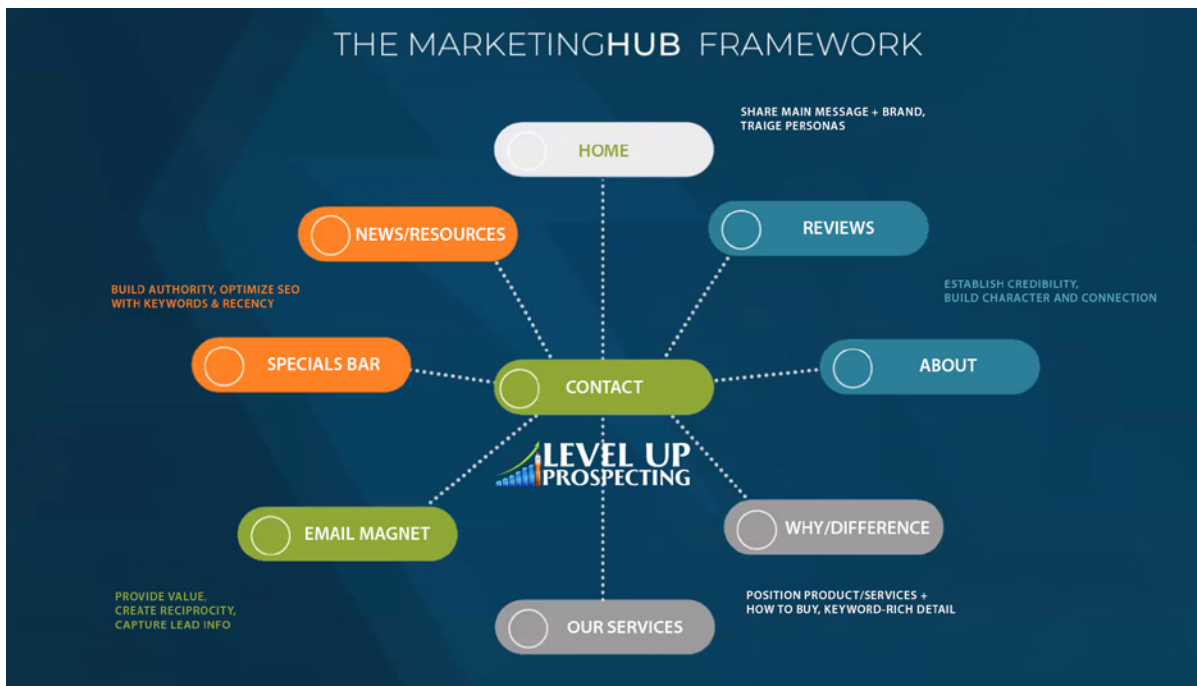
a solid online reputation are crucial for attracting new patients, as most people rely on reviews when choosing health care providers. To maximize your online reputation, be sure to:

- encourage reviews and share engagement links
- monitor customer reviews and respond\* to feedback

(\*Work with a HIPAA-compliant marketing team to ensure that online responses include HIPAA Compliance wording and that content shared does not breach unintentional disclosure of protected health information. Examples: "We strive to have our patients seeing their best." "We provide high customer care to all our patients.")

**Content marketing** is another next-level strategy for improving patient engagement. With this technique, you create and share online content that both educates prospective patients and shares the personality of your practice, helping to attract loyal patients who will happily refer your practice. Write informative articles on topics like "How to Choose the Right Glasses," "Signs You May Need an Eye Exam" and "The Benefits of Regular Vision Checkups."

**Add a blog and a monthly newsletter** by creating a series from each content article to share as content across social media platforms, through email and text marketing, and in pay-per-click



ads — all of which will help you maintain a consistent presence with your local neighbors and prospects. With an efficient system, you'll need just a couple hours per month to input content.

### **Simplify the Digital Path to Becoming a Patient**

Websites, move over! The best path to getting new patients is now the funnel hub, which utilizes a clear and direct path to a single call to action (e.g., connecting with your office to

schedule an appointment). In the funnel hub marketing concept, all of your marketing methods and web pages are like the spokes of a wheel that lead to a central point (the hub) where your patients can connect directly with your business. Although this concept features some seemingly subtle differences from a typical practice's marketing program, taking advantage of those differences can have a profound impact on results — and the success of your practice.

A well-designed, mobile-friendly funnel as the hub of your marketing can be a powerful tool for gaining trust with prospects and current patients, helping to enhance patient attraction, engagement and retention. A funnel hub's key elements include:

- **Clear navigation:** Create a structure that allows visitors to easily find essential information, such as services, appointment booking and contact details. Level up your navigation with automated responses that include links to appointment booking.
- **Easy-to-use communication tools:** Click-to-call buttons, online chat options and forms to request callbacks enable patients to connect with you via their preferred communication style.
- **Appointment scheduling:** Incorporate an online booking system that lets patients schedule appointments with just a few clicks. Include automated appointment reminders with requested replies to ensure the highest show-up rates.

Having a system to automate replies and guide patients to answers that help them engage with your practice will provide consistency and save your staff valuable time. Better connections lead to greater patient affection toward your practice, and that is how loyalty is born.

## Boost Referrals

Satisfied patients trust you and your practice, and they can become powerful advocates for you. Encourage referrals with a systemized strategy:

- **Patient referral programs:** Reward patients who refer friends or family members to your practice with discounts or perks.
- **Review requests:** Send follow-up messages asking patients to leave reviews on Google, Facebook and other platforms.
- **Social media engagement:** Highlight patient stories and testimonials in your posts to amplify their voices.
- **Follow-up communication:** Send text messages or emails reminding patients of upcoming appointments or offering post-appointment care tips.
- **Exclusive content:** Offer access to patient-only newsletters featuring eye care articles, seasonal promotions and updates about your practice.
- **Loyalty programs:** Create a rewards program in which patients earn points that are redeemable for discounts on glasses or other services.

In short, make it easy for your happy patients to rave about your practice and refer you!

## Find + Choose + Refer = Your Practice Levelled Up!

The digital age offers Optometrists a plethora of tools to grow their practices and connect deeply with their communities. By establishing a solid digital foundation with visibility and credibility, your practice can accelerate its local reach to ensure that you remain competitive and accessible in today's digital landscape.

In addition to enhancing your online presence, you can ensure that your patients feel valued and well informed. From SEO and social media to email marketing and community engagement, these marketing strategies provide a comprehensive framework to help you thrive and dominate in the modern world.

As a courtesy, Level Up Prospecting is currently offering a professional, complimentary evaluation of your practice's digital marketing program. Visit us at [LevelUpProspecting.com](http://LevelUpProspecting.com) to learn more. Your patients — and your practice — will thank you.

**Jennifer Ratliff**, founder of Level Up Prospecting, began her career working directly with local and national providers of merchant services to enhance their profits, security and transaction speed. On the side she dabbled with computer programming and website building.

As the depth of digital marketing developed, Jennifer shifted her focus toward satisfying what business owners identified as their greatest desires: more customers, more sales and more profits. And thus, Level Up Prospecting was born. Using proven systems with meaningful and measurable results across the full scope of the digital landscape, she guides and boosts client success, allowing each business owner to get back to doing their core work. As Level Up's tag line states, *new customers + new sales = new lifestyle!*



Ten imaging modalities across all Optos devices. Now including natural color, **optomap** color rgb, **optomap**, the **ONLY** single shot, 200° ultra-widefield retinal image.

**optos**

# *Congratulations*

**Dr. Jacquie Bowen**

on being elected as the first  
corporate OD president of the AOA.



**AACO**<sup>TM</sup>

American Association of Corporate Optometrists<sup>TM</sup>



AMERICAN  
OPTOMETRIC  
ASSOCIATION

# AACO Member Profile

## Coming Full Circle

### How AACO Helped Me Build a Thriving Optometry Practice After Military Service

#### Jumpstart Your Practice with AACO

After 26 years of practicing Optometry in the United States Navy, I returned home with a dream: to open my own clinic and serve my community with the same commitment I brought to every patient throughout my military career. That dream became reality when I founded King Vision in Nacogdoches, TX, in 2019. Today, King Vision is proud to be recognized by The Daily Sentinel as one of the best Optometry clinics in the region, and I wholeheartedly credit AACO for playing a pivotal role in that success.

Starting a private practice can feel overwhelming — especially when, in my case, transitioning from a structured military environment to the corporate Optometry world. Joining AACO gave me the tools, resources and confidence I needed. From the moment I became a member, I was reassured by being in the company of seasoned professionals who understood the nuances of corporate practice. And since then, AACO membership has provided me with countless professional benefits.

AACO helped me navigate my Walmart lease, evaluate essential equipment purchases and select the right electronic health record (EHR) system. With the association's guidance, I chose RevolutionEHR, which has streamlined our patient management and record-keeping systems tremendously. And through AACO's network, I discovered Optometric Billing Consultants, a firm founded by Dr. Eric Botts that has been instrumental in helping King Vision stay on top of insurance credentialing, coding and billing — a critical foundation for any thriving practice.

In 2024, I was deeply honored to be named AACO's Member of the Year. To me, that recognition is more than just a title — it also reflects the guidance, community and mentorship



#### Jacqueline Pierre, OD, FFAO, FACHE

Dr. Pierre is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. The owner of King Vision, a certified veteran-, woman- and minority-owned Optometry clinic located inside a Walmart in Nacogdoches, TX, she is also an AACO member, an advocate for underserved populations and a passionate community leader.

AACO consistently provides. I am forever grateful for how the organization has helped spearhead the growth of King Vision.

To any corporate Optometrist considering AACO membership, I offer this simple advice: Join. Whether you're just starting out or looking to elevate your practice, AACO is a partner in your success. The association's collective wisdom, industry connections and unwavering support make all the difference.

#### Building a Practice — and a Commitment to Community

After years of hard work and thoughtful decisions, today King Vision is outfitted with state-of-the-art technology that elevates patient care and practice efficiency. Our suite includes Zeiss Cirrus optical coherence tomography for high-resolution retinal imaging and Optos Ultra-widefield retinal imaging, which captures 200 degrees of the retina in a single image — both of which are essential for early disease detection. We utilize the RETeval handheld electroretinogram for quick, objective functional retinal assessments, which is particularly helpful in managing diabetic retinopathy and inherited retinal disorders. Our automated digital phoropter, which is fully integrated with RevolutionEHR, makes refractions seamless and efficient, enhancing both the patient experience and our clinical workflow.

In addition to comprehensive eye exams and medical eye care, we offer a full dry eye suite that includes advanced diagnostics and treatments like Equinox Low-Level Light Therapy

by Essilor Instruments and manual meibomian gland expression. Dry eye is one of the most underdiagnosed and undertreated conditions in Optometry, and our goal at King Vision is to provide long-term relief through personalized care plans. Whether patients experience chronic irritation, visual fluctuation or screen fatigue, we're equipped to treat the full spectrum of dry eye disease.

We also work closely with local ophthalmologists and primary care providers through co-management of cataract surgery, glaucoma, diabetic eye disease and other complex conditions. Strong referral relationships and shared-care protocols help ensure that our patients receive timely and coordinated treatment, while remaining supported by the King Vision team.

Contact lens care is another standout feature of our clinic. We provide a robust selection, including MySight, Alcon, CooperVision and Altius Performance Lenses. One of the most exciting additions to our contact lens offerings has been eureka! by Bausch + Lomb. These daily disposable lenses offer a high-quality, affordable option for patients who want the convenience of dailies without the premium cost, enabling us to serve cost-sensitive patients without compromising quality or comfort.

Beyond the clinic, I remain deeply committed to serving the Nacogdoches community. I am honored to serve as secretary of the Nacogdoches Breakfast Lions Club, where we focus on vision-related outreach, including eye screenings and eyeglass programs for children. I also serve as second vice commander of American Legion Post 86, supporting veterans and



their families, and I am an appointed member of the Nacogdoches Zoning Board of Adjustment, where I contribute to responsible development in our historic town. These roles align closely with my passion for Optometry, community health and veteran advocacy.

I also hold fellowships in both the American Academy of Optometry and the American College of Healthcare Executives — credentials that reflect my ongoing commitment to clinical excellence and health care leadership.

King Vision is not just my post-military passion project — it's a testament to what's possible when experience, mentorship and community come together.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Botts, who served as my primary mentor, as well as Dr. Robert Houghteling and Dr. Tenesha Bazemore, both of whom have offered encouragement, insight and support throughout my journey. Congratulations to Dr. Bazemore on receiving the 2023 JJV Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award from AACO, an honor that speaks to her commitment to our profession and her impact on colleagues like me.

## The Best of Nac 2025

2025

ONE OF THE BEST OF Nac

The Daily Sentinel

One of the Best Optometrists:

Jacqueline L. Pierre,

OD FAO FACHE

# KING VISION

# AACO<sup>TM</sup>

would like to  
**THANK**  
our 2025 Corporate Sponsors

**GOLD LEVEL**

**BAUSCH+LOMB**

See better. Live better.

**SILVER LEVEL**

**Alcon**

**BRONZE LEVEL**

**abbvie**

**SUPPORTER LEVEL**

*Johnson & Johnson* VISION

 **optos**<sup>®</sup>

 **TOPCON** Healthcare  
SEEING EYE HEALTH DIFFERENTLY

# Why I Recommend eureka!™ Daily Lenses to My Patients



**Eric Botts, OD**

**E**ver since Walmart repackaged the BioTrue daily lens into the eureka! daily lens, I have been recommending the eureka! as my first-choice spherical daily lens. This is an easy recommendation for me to make, as I firmly believe that a daily-replacement contact lens is the healthiest choice, and the cost is now affordable for most of my patients. For cost-conscious patients, I explain that the costs of eureka! daily lenses and monthly contact lenses are very comparable, when you factor in the combined costs of lenses, lens cases and solution. I also emphasize to parents that it is much healthier for kids to wear daily lenses, and in most cases I insist on only fitting daily lenses for children under 18.

Here's a cost breakdown of eureka! dailies versus monthly contact lenses: The cost for a year's supply of monthly lenses varies by brand, between \$251.44 (Air Optix with HydraGlyde) and \$335.44 (VITA). Disinfecting solution is \$9 a bottle, on average, and lens cases cost about \$1 each. So, depending on how well the patient cares for their monthly lenses, additional costs could amount to \$40-\$100 per year — bringing the total yearly cost for monthly lenses to between \$291.44 and \$435.44.

On the other hand, a year's supply of eureka! daily lenses costs \$382.88 — and that's if lenses are worn every single day of the year. If the patient doesn't wear lenses seven days a week, the yearly eureka! cost drops even further. With that in mind, it's clear to me that prescribing eureka! daily lenses is not only the healthier option for my patients, but also an extremely cost-efficient one.



And while contact lens cost is often a factor for my patients, it's not the only factor. Health and comfort are also very important, and my patients have been extremely satisfied with eureka! daily lenses in both aspects. As a doctor, it's satisfying to know that my patients are wearing healthy, comfortable lenses that provide them with sharp, crisp vision — and at a very reasonable price.

**Dr. Botts** started his first practice in a Walmart Vision Center and has since opened three additional offices. He owns OBC, an insurance billing, credentialing and education company that helps providers navigate the complexities of patient insurance transactions.

# BRIDGING THE GAP:

## HOW DIGITAL ADVERTISING IS HELPING DRIVE PATIENT AWARENESS FOR EYE CARE



As primary eye care providers, optometrists know that patient education is the foundation of good ocular health. Yet, in today's fast-moving, digitally driven world, reaching patients with that message—and motivating them to take action—can be challenging. That's why Bausch + Lomb (B+L), in collaboration with JSJD Media, has embraced targeted digital advertising through Google Ads and addressable programmatic marketing to help drive awareness and increase patient visits at Walmart Vision Centers.

For ODs practicing within Walmart Vision Centers, this initiative is helping bring more patients through your doors by raising awareness about the importance of regular comprehensive eye exams. These campaigns don't just promote products—they reinforce **why** eye exams matter, from both a preventive health and vision care standpoint.

### CONNECTING PATIENTS WITH THEIR LOCAL EYE CARE PROVIDERS

One of the greatest strengths of digital advertising is its precision. Rather than casting a wide net, B+L is using advanced targeting tools to deliver specific, localized messaging to the communities surrounding Walmart Vision Centers. These ads highlight the convenience, affordability, and clinical importance of routine eye care, helping to remove barriers that might prevent patients from scheduling their next visit.

For you as an optometrist, that means a direct benefit—more patients coming into your practice, empowered with the knowledge that regular eye exams are essential to preserving their vision and overall health. These campaigns help reinforce your role as their trusted healthcare provider, while helping drive practice growth at the same time.

### DATA-DRIVEN ADVERTISING: SUPPORTING CLINICAL PRACTICE

What sets this approach apart is the ability to measure its effectiveness in real time. Through data analytics, B+L and Walmart can see which messages resonate most—whether it's emphasizing preventive care, affordability, or convenience—and then fine-tune the campaigns for maximum impact. This ensures that the patients who walk into your practice aren't arriving by accident—they're arriving because they were informed, motivated, and ready to take proactive steps for their eye health.

### WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

As an optometrist, you dedicate your career to helping patients safeguard their vision. But driving that patient behavior—especially for those who may not fully appreciate the value of preventive eye care—can be challenging. That's where this partnership makes a difference. By using sophisticated, targeted advertising to raise awareness and educate patients, Walmart Vision Centers are helping to bridge the gap between education and action.

This strategy not only strengthens patient engagement but also underscores the growing role of digital platforms in supporting healthcare providers. It's about ensuring that your expertise and commitment to care are matched by robust efforts to connect patients with your services.

### A SHARED COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY EYE HEALTH

Ultimately, this program isn't just about ads—it's about delivering excellent patient outcomes. By raising awareness and making eye care accessible, we're collectively helping to support the eye health of the communities we serve. Together—with your clinical expertise and our commitment to outreach—we can continue to ensure that as many people as possible get the care they need, when they need it.

# comfort and design— eureka!™ for astigmatism:

where innovation, stability, and affordability meet

BY KEVIN FAHY, PRINCIPAL ENGINEER & R&D TECHNICAL LEAD  
JILL SAXON, OD, SENIOR DIRECTOR, PROFESSIONAL STRATEGY



## understanding today's astigmatic patient

Nearly 50% of patients need a toric correction in one of their eyes. Currently, 31% of toric contact lens wearers experience blurry vision. Closing that gap means pairing precise optics with a lens that feels comfortable from morning to night—and making it easy for practitioners to fit quickly and confidently.

## advanced material + patented dehydration barrier

The eureka!™ for astigmatism daily disposable lens is made using the proven nesofilcon A material. The lens contains the hydrophilic polymer PVP, achieving a 78% water content—identical to the cornea. A patented Poloxamer 407 surface-active dehydration barrier locks that moisture in, so laboratory testing shows the lens retains nearly 100% of its water for up to 16 hours.

## Evolved Peri-Ballast geometry for on-eye stability

Building on extensive blink-pattern research, eureka!™ features an Evolved Peri-Ballast Design with:

- a thin, tapered edge engineered for minimal lid interaction
- a 6 o'clock orientation mark and axis indicator
- rotational stability of < 10° in 97% of patients after one week of wear

These features translate to consistently clear vision, less chair time, and high first-fit success: in a seven-site study, eye-care professionals were satisfied with the fitting speed on 98% of patients.

## high-definition optics that go beyond clarity

The optics of the lens are optimized across the entire power range in both axes to minimize spherical aberration in order to reduce halos and glare—even in low-light settings. The aspheric optical system used in eureka!™ toric lenses is the same trusted design found in eureka!™ spherical daily and monthly lenses, offering consistent clarity across the product family.

## key parameters at a glance

| parameter        | specification                                                                                       |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| base curve       | 8.4 mm                                                                                              |
| diameter         | 14.5 mm                                                                                             |
| center thickness | 0.10 mm @ -3.00d                                                                                    |
| power range      | plano to -6.00d in 0.25d steps<br>-6.50d to -9.00d in 0.50d steps<br>+4.00d to plano in 0.25d steps |
| cylinders        | -0.75d, -1.25d, -1.75d                                                                              |
| axes (°)         | 10, 20, 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 160, 170, 180                                                         |
| dk/t             | 42 @ -3.00d                                                                                         |
| modality         | daily wear; class II UV blocker with 90-day performance guarantee                                   |

## comfort, convenience, and cost

With its blend of comfort-driven design, advanced hydration retention, and affordability, eureka!™ for astigmatism provides a solution that addresses patient concerns around cost, clarity, and ease of wear—providing an option to astigmatic patients who previously avoided contact lenses due to discomfort.

eureka!™ is distributed exclusively through Walmart Vision Centers, patients receive the most affordable daily toric option in the aisle while enjoying the health and lifestyle benefits of a fresh lens every day. No solutions, no cases—just clear, comfortable vision throughout the day.

## take-home message

eureka!™ for astigmatism merges the high-water, high-Dk/t nesofilcon A material with a best-in-class dehydration barrier, next-generation peri-ballast geometry and HD optics. The result is a lens that fits fast, stays stable, and keeps patients comfortable—and does so at an affordable price for astigmats who could benefit from them.

# Ortho-K, All Day, Every Day



Toseef Hasan, OD

The word *irony* is defined as: “the expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect, most often used with sarcasm.” This is a wonderful word that very accurately describes how my Optometry career started and where it is currently trending. Let me explain.





**Clear vision,  
smart savings.**

Contacts available here & at [Walmartcontacts.com](http://Walmartcontacts.com)





When I graduated from the Illinois College of Optometry (ICO), I thought working with children was just way too difficult, and that I would never do pediatrics. I didn't have the patience, and I had no concept of an "indoor voice." No, thank you. Hard pass. One of my colleagues had two back-to-back rotations in peds at ICO, and I used to joke that he should probably be in therapy. I genuinely felt sad for him. For myself, one summer rotation at ICO was all it took to convince me that peds just wasn't for me.

Among other reasons, I chose a career in Optometry because of the dynamic nature of the specialty. You typically see a variety of cases on any given day, and what I really enjoyed was the immediate impact of vision correction. I did *not*, however, choose Optometry to work with children. So, naturally, the first job I took after graduating was working with a pediatric Ophthalmologist. Yes, ironic and kind of funny, but it just shows how "smart" I was at 24. On my days off from that pediatric practice, I would do fill-in work at various other offices. One time I had the opportunity to fill in at a Walmart, and I had a wonderful experience — the staff was friendly, the patients were appreciative, and the pay was beyond my expectations. It was right then that I had my "aha!" moment, telling me: These are going to be my patients, this is going to be my office, and I'll be able to choose the hours I want to work. With little in the way of overhead expenses, I could practice Optometry the way I wanted. I was sold. Dr. Eric Botts has a great saying: It's not *where* you practice that determines what type of Optometrist you are; *how* you practice Optometry determines what type of Optometrist you are. This is the way I want to practice, at a private practice within a corporate setting.

My involvement with AACO started in 2013. I was one of the original 12 founders of Energieyes, along with my colleagues Dr. Mark Uhler, Dr. Naheed Ahmad and Dr. Botts. These individuals, along with some gentle encouragement from Dr. Chad Overman, created an association for corporate Optometrists to give this substantial group — which represents 25 percent of all Optometrists — a united voice. It's fun and fulfilling to be around like-minded individuals, and AACO truly understands





the needs and challenges of practicing in a corporate setting. Being involved with AACO also made me realize how important it was for me to be involved in my state organization, the Illinois Optometric Association (IOA), so I started attending our local society meetings and later became president of the Fox Valley Society. Working with our local and state politicians, we were able to pass new laws to address how VSP Vision Care compensates ODs in Illinois. This achievement for our profession showed me that working together, Optometrists

can be a formidable force. With big enough numbers, we can't be ignored.

My path toward orthokeratology ("ortho-k"), which is now my professional passion, started like this. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, I started noticing an alarming trend among my patients: They were becoming more and more myopic. And not just children (that would have made sense, since they are most susceptible to myopic progression). I'm talking about patients across virtually all demographics. After researching the



issue a bit, it seemed to me that two seminal events in our lifetimes have caused this dramatic shift. The first was the invention of the iPod/iPhone/iPad in the early 2000s, which essentially put a screen in everyone's hand. The second was the COVID-19 lockdown, when every aspect of life went online: school, work, religion, dating, socialization, shopping, etc.

Research is ongoing, but it appears that all that additional screen time caused us to go from a typical linear change in prescriptions to a geometric increase.

A CE class I attended solidified my interest in ortho-k. When I was president of the Fox Valley Society, I invited Dr. Louise A. Sclafani to present a session, during which she discussed myopia control. Something she said sent a cold shiver down my spine [I'm paraphrasing here]: "All those 8-year-olds who

## Following the COVID-19 pandemic, I started noticing an alarming trend among my patients: They were becoming more and more myopic.



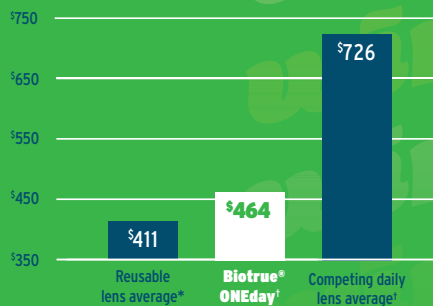
are now PL or -0.25, who you don't currently give a second thought to? Their prescriptions are going to explode in the next 5-6 years." I can't speak for all ODs, but after hearing this foreboding statement, I realized I wasn't doing enough in my practice to address the coming wave of changes in my patients' vision. While hundreds of my patients were getting their annual back-to-school eye exams, they were going to need something

## DAILY BENEFITS. COMPARABLE COST.

That's a win win! Switch your reusable lens wearers to the convenience of daily disposables at a price that makes it simple.



TOTAL PATIENT COST



ASK US HOW

\*Based on ABB Glimpse reported average frequent replacement lens box price (July-December 2024) after new-wearer rebate and \$138 lens care cost (which assumes one bottle of multi-purpose solution per month at an average price of \$11.51) for the following lenses in available indications: AIR OPTIX HydraGlyde, Biofinity, Biofinity Energys, ACUVUE VITA 6-pack and 12-pack, ACUVUE OASYS 2-week 12-pack and 24-pack, TOTAL30, and Bausch + Lomb ULTRA®.

†Based on ABB Glimpse reported average daily box price (July-December 2024) after new-wearer rebate.

©2025 Bausch + Lomb. BOD.0024.USA.25

**BAUSCH + LOMB**

more effective. So after that CE class, I contacted an ortho-k rep, who then put me in touch with some area doctors who had passion for and a ton of experience in fitting ortho-k lenses. However, before diving headfirst into myopia control and buying a top-of-the-line topographer, I decided to talk to my patients about ortho-k and see if there was any interest.

I was overwhelmed by the response. We started a sign-up sheet and received responses from more than 60 interested patients in the first two months. Taking the bold step to incorporate



WANT TO FIT MORE PATIENTS TODAY?

**WE GOT YOU**



**MAINTAINS**  
**95%**  
of moisture for  
16 hours<sup>1</sup>

Prescribe the family  
of contact lenses with the  
**WIDEST RANGE OF  
PARAMETERS AVAILABLE**  
for immediate in-office fitting\*

**VIEW  
PARAMETERS**



\*Based on a fit set comparison of the following brands: Biofinity, AIR OPTIX, ACUVUE OASYS, ACUVUE VITA, and TOTAL30.  
**REFERENCE: 1.** Data on file. Bausch & Lomb Incorporated. Rochester, NY.

©2025 Bausch + Lomb. ZUS.0022.USA.25

**BAUSCH+LOMB**

some level of myopia control was then no longer a question of *if*, but *when* I should get started. We made a significant investment in educating ourselves during the initial two years of implementing ortho-k, including many meetings, numerous setbacks and countless hours trying to figure out a protocol to help teach parents and children the dos and don'ts of orthokeratology.

Ortho-k has been a great fit with our patient population at Walmart. We get lots of word-of-mouth referrals, and some patients who would typically see their private-practice OD for a yearly eye exam are now seeing me at a Walmart for their myopia control. Am I happy with my decision? Absolutely! Looking back on my career so far, the best decisions I have made were, in order of importance: 1) practicing Optometry inside a Walmart, 2) using a medical model for care, 3) adopting orthokeratology for myopia control, and 4) partnering with business partners that support my business. Thanks in part to some of the decisions I've made, I love my work. And in another bit of irony, if you enjoy what you do, it doesn't even feel like work.

Speaking of business partners that support my business, I would like to highlight one in particular. Bausch + Lomb (B+L) has partnered with Walmart to create the eureka! family of private-label contact lenses, which I have incorporated into my practice. Currently B+L offers the eureka! monthly [private label for ULTRA monthly], eureka! daily [Biotrue ONEday] and eureka! toric daily [Biotrue ONEday for Astigmatism]. Two things I really like about this collaboration: First, eureka! lenses are based off a great daily disposable lens, the Biotrue ONEday. When manufacturers collaborate, sometimes they use the lowest-caliber product available — technology from the 1990s. That's not the case with the eureka! lenses. Second, the pricing is extremely attractive. Having an affordable, high-quality product is very important in today's economy, and the partnership between B+L and Walmart has filled a need, providing a great product for a phenomenal price. Five years ago, I never would have thought so much small talk would revolve around the price of eggs and other essentials — but here we are. Then again, five years ago I wouldn't have thought about talking to my patients about ortho-k. Times change, and we make the best out of them. Like my dad often says: If you live life long enough, you might learn something. Once again, a bit of irony: The older I get, the smarter my dad gets.

Writing this article gave me a chance to reflect on my career. I feel like I'm about at the halfway point of my professional journey, and I'm looking forward to the next chapters in my optometric career. Yes, against all my expectations, children make up the majority of my practice. And new surprises are surely ahead. Maybe in 10 years I'll write another article about how I practice vision therapy on children, my side hustle as a childcare center and my new book on how to speak to toddlers with an indoor voice.

Yes, as Alanis Morissette would say, that would be ironic. Don't you think?

**Dr. Hasan** is a 2003 graduate of the Illinois College of Optometry. After practicing with a pediatric Ophthalmologist for two years, he opened his own office inside a Walmart Vision Center in 2005 and now has two locations. He has been an advocate for Optometry, speaking to Optometrists throughout the United States, appearing on television programs and serving as a key optometric liaison for Bausch + Lomb. He is also a past president of the Fox Valley Optometric Society. His core philosophy has always been: "Do right by the patient." In his spare time, he enjoys playing basketball and the occasional spin at the Joliet Autobahn.

## AACO CORPORATE CHAIRS

We are here to answer  
your questions



Maria Fragoulis, OD  
Walmart



Mark Gifford, OD  
Vision Works



Rosemary Holcomb, OD  
LensCrafters



Robert Houghteling,  
OD, FAAO  
Pearl Vision



H. Anthony Kwong,  
OD, FAAO, Dipl. ABO  
Sam's Club



Steve J. Lowinger, OD  
Costco



Lauren Waldron, OD  
Target



**Gayle Leff Goldstein, MD**  
Co-Managing Partner  
Georgia Eye Partners

# Setting the Standard of Care

## Georgia Eye Partners Leads Greater Atlanta in Surgical and Medical Eye Care

**G**eorgia Eye Partners, based in Atlanta, is a leading ophthalmology practice providing comprehensive, cutting-edge medical and surgical eye care. With eight clinics and three surgery centers accredited by the American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities across metro Atlanta and North Georgia, the practice is trusted for delivering consistently high-quality medical and surgical outcomes.

Georgia Eye Partners offers a full spectrum of ophthalmic services, using advanced technology for tailored treatments of cataracts; glaucoma; corneal diseases; dry eye syndrome; oculoplastics and refractive surgeries like LASIK, PRK and EVO ICL.

The practice's board-certified surgeons are nationally recognized for their expertise and have been named "top doctors" by their local peers for more than 10 consecutive years. Each doctor is focused on providing individualized, compassionate care while remaining at the forefront of the latest eye care technologies. Several Georgia Eye Partners doctors were among the first in the state to adopt advanced technologies that preserve, restore or enhance vision — including the iTrack Advance canaloplasty device, the DURYSTA implant, the CAIRS procedure, EVO ICL and more.

Clinic locations include Northside Atlanta, Emory Midtown, Decatur, Johns Creek, Snellville, Woodstock, Marietta

and Dallas — ensuring convenience and continuity of care for patients throughout the greater Atlanta area.

With a reputation for clinical excellence, high patient satisfaction and a collaborative care model, Georgia Eye Partners is the ideal partner for Optometrists seeking to enhance their service offerings and strengthen the continuum of care. Referring patients to Georgia Eye Partners means entrusting them to a team that values integrity, clinical precision and long-term vision health, while delivering exceptional outcomes and maintaining seamless communication.

Through strong referring partnerships and a shared commitment to excellence, Georgia Eye Partners sets — and elevates — the standard of eye care for patients in the greater Atlanta region.

**Dr. Gayle Leff Goldstein** is a board-certified comprehensive ophthalmologist and co-managing partner at Georgia Eye Partners. She specializes in advanced cataract surgery, tailoring lens implants to each patient's visual needs, and treats conditions like diabetes, glaucoma, dry eye and eyelid disorders. An Atlanta native, she earned her medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia and completed her residency at Wayne State University. She serves as chief of ophthalmology at Emory Decatur Hospital and is active in clinical research. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, tennis and cheering on Atlanta United with her husband and two daughters.



# Better vision as far as the eye can see.

At Georgia Eye Partners,  
your vision is our mission.

*Voted Top Doctors 2024 by Atlanta Magazine,*

we are a specialty eye care group comprised of 27 expert physicians providing comprehensive medical and surgical eye care across Metro Atlanta and North Georgia. Our services range from medical management to complex surgical care for conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma, corneal disease, and retinal disease.

*explore your possibilities at*

**[gaeyepartners.com](https://gaeyepartners.com)**



# Protecting the Future

## Prioritizing Children's Eye Health and Safety

**A**ugust marks Children's Eye Health and Safety Month, a timely reminder that our youngest patients rely on us — not only to correct their vision, but also to safeguard their eye health as they grow, learn and play. As corporate Optometrists, we occupy a unique space that blends clinical care with organizational influence, positioning us to make lasting impacts within health care systems, schools and communities.

### The Hidden Crisis: Undiagnosed Vision Problems

Experts estimate that one in four school-aged children has an undiagnosed vision problem — and many of these issues, unfortunately, are mistaken for behavioral challenges or learning disabilities. As Optometrists, we understand the critical link between vision and academic success, yet millions of children start school each year without ever receiving a comprehensive eye exam.

Corporate Optometry can address this diagnostic gap through:

- **Strategic partnerships** with school systems for on-site screenings and tele-Optometry services
- **Pediatric-specific marketing campaigns** to educate parents during back-to-school season
- **Integration of pediatric vision metrics into electronic medical records** for better data collection and outcome tracking

### Eye Safety Beyond the Exam Lane

Children are naturally curious and physically active, which can put their eyes at risk for injury. According to Prevent Blindness, more than 125,000 eye injuries occur annually in children due to toys, sports or household accidents.

To help promote eye safety:

- **Counsel parents** on the importance of age-appropriate toys and protective eyewear during sports.
- **Encourage polycarbonate lenses** for children who are active or require prescription glasses.



**Jacqueline Pierre,  
OD, FAAO, FACHE**

- **Collaborate with local pediatricians and urgent care centers** to develop eye injury protocols and ensure follow-up care.

### Technology and the Developing Eye

With digital screens embedded into nearly every facet of modern childhood — from remote learning to gaming — corporate Optometrists must lead the charge in addressing digital eyestrain and myopia progression.

- **Educate families** on the 20-20-20 rule (i.e., for every 20 minutes spent using a screen, look away at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds), as well as the importance of spending time outdoors.
- **Leverage corporate platforms** to offer myopia management services, including orthokeratology and pharmaceutical therapies.
- **Provide ergonomic tips and education** on the hazards of overexposure to blue light during pediatric visits.

### A Call to Action

As members of AACO, we carry both a clinical and corporate responsibility to prioritize children's vision. Whether you serve in retail, medical groups, academia or innovation sectors, this August is a chance to champion pediatric eye health initiatives that are proactive, accessible and equitable.

Together, let's help ensure that every child sees a brighter future.

**Dr. Pierre** is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. The owner of King Vision, a certified veteran-, woman- and minority-owned Optometry clinic located inside a Walmart in Nacogdoches, TX, she is also an AACO member, an advocate for underserved populations and a passionate community leader.

# 2025 Southeast Regional Conference RECAP



**Peg Densmore, Ed.S**

**AACO held its Southeast Regional Conference** on March 2, 2025, at Maggiano's Little Italy in Buckhead, GA. The conference offered seven hours of continuing education (CE), along with an exhibit hall, providing opportunities for attendees to network, explore new technologies and business strategies, and gain knowledge about exhibitor products. All those present also had a chance to enjoy a wonderful Italian meal!

A huge thank-you goes out to Georgia Eye Partners, AACO's conference sponsor, which provided two speakers for the event. Dr. Pooja Mally presented a course on "Lower Eyelid Malpositions," and Dr. Gayle Leff Goldstein followed with a lecture on "Specialized Pseudophakic Selection."

Members of the AACO Board of Directors provided most of the day's CE instruction. AACO Past President Dr. Melonie Clemmons started the morning off with "Expanding the Optometrist's Toolbox in Treating AMD and Dry Eye Disease." Dr. John Womack, AACO board member at large, followed with his presentation, "My Eyes Are Still Dry, Even After Using These Drops. What Else Can I Do?"

Attendees then visited the conference exhibit hall, which included booths from AbbVie, Alcon, DLP Capital, Georgia Eye Partners, Glaukos, Lenz, Optos and Topcon. Attendees who made use of their Exhibit Hall Passports were eligible for a number of exciting door prizes.

Later, AACO Vice President Dr. Laureen Waldron presented "I Have No MONEY, SPACE, TIME, SKILL for THAT!" Dr. Clemmons then presented her second course of the day, "Exploding Your Practice Potential: An Open Forum on Growing a Contact Lens Practice and Expanding Profitability." After lunch, Mr. Lee Waldron presented an informative course on "Cybersecurity for the Modern Optometrist."

Once again, thanks to all of our sponsors, exhibitors and attendees!

2025 Southeast  
Regional  
Conference  
RECAP



Dr. Melonie Clemmons and Dr. Lauren Waldron pose with the AACO mascot.



Attendees visit the exhibit hall.



Exhibit hall



Exhibit hall



Attendees listen to Mr. Lee Waldron's presentation.



Dr. Pooja Mally presents on "Lower Eyelid Malpositions"



Attendees listen to a presentation by Dr. Lauren Waldron



Attendees network during a break.



Dr. Lauren Waldron celebrating Mardi Gras.



Robert Houghteling, OD, FAAO

# Tips for Reporting Courses to ARBO and CE Broker

**A**lthough Optometry continuing education (CE) requirements vary from state to state, sticking with courses approved by the Council on Optometric Practitioner Education (COPE) and CE Broker helps ensure high-quality content that focuses on subject matter relevant to our industry. AACO staff goes to great lengths to make sure that all conference courses are approved for all states, diligently working to ensure that the CE process is as user-friendly as possible for our members and attendees.

However, making sure that CE courses we attend are properly logged into our accounts and reported to the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO) can still require some follow-up. If needed, AACO can log courses into your OE Tracker and/or CE Broker account, but it is ultimately each member's and attendee's responsibility to make sure CE courses are recorded in the appropriate accounts.

The most efficient and timely way for Optometrists in states that do not use CE Broker to upload their COPE-approved courses is through the OE Tracker app (all non-CE Broker Optometrists should have an OE Tracker number/account). This should not be confused with the optional OE Tracker subscription, which costs \$25 annually. With or without an OE Tracker subscription, Optometrists can utilize the QR scan function in the

OE Tracker app to immediately upload their courses to their OE Tracker account. Please note, however, that Optometrists *without* an OE Tracker subscription cannot *manually* upload courses they have attended — they would have to rely on conference organizers to upload their courses at a later date. Those *with* a subscription have the option of uploading courses

manually, if needed. Also, be mindful that it can take three to five business days before courses are logged into your account. Subscribers also have multiple viewing and transcript options that are unavailable to nonsubscribers. Further questions about OE Tracker options can be found at [www.arbo.org/oetracker/main](http://www.arbo.org/oetracker/main) or by calling 866-869-6852.

Optometrists in Texas, Florida, South Carolina and Michigan are required to track their continuing education with CE Broker. There is no fee to the member if event organizers upload the conference courses. Members do, however, encounter a self-submission fee if they manually upload their courses themselves.

As a final note, you should always leave an AACO CE event with a signed certificate of attendance, which will be provided in your registration packet. This certificate, intended as a backup, will help ensure that your courses will be credited properly, should there be an error or oversight in reporting. And should you have any questions concerning ARBO and CE Broker reporting, an AACO board member will always be available for consultation at CE events. We want to make sure you get the CE credit you deserve, and we look forward to seeing you at the next AACO conference!

**Dr. Houghteling** is a 40-year resident of Camden County, GA, and is actively involved in the community. He is a member of the American Optometric Association and Georgia Optometric Association, a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, and incoming president of the American Association of Corporate Optometrists. Dr. Houghteling is a recently retired colonel in the United States Air Force Reserve and served as the IMA to the AF Optometry Corp Chief. He is a two-time Rotarian of the Year through the Rotary Club of Camden County. He and his wife, Valerie, have two sons, Drew and Cole.



# 2025 AACO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## *Speakers*



**Paul Ajamian,**  
OD, Dipl. ABO



**Tim Early,**  
OD



**Murray Fingeret,**  
OD, FAAO



**Robert Houghteling,**  
OD, FAAO



**Alice Sterling,**  
OD



**Steven Sorkin,**  
OD, FSLs



**Laureen Waldron,**  
OD



# The Optometry Family Gathers in Minnesota



**Douglas C. Melzer,**  
OD, Dipl. ABO

**T**his past June 25-28, more than 4,500 doctors, students, staff and community members met in Minneapolis to attend the 2025 Optometry's Meeting | 5th World Congress of Optometry, which combined the 128th annual American Optometric Association (AOA) Congress and the 57th annual American Optometric Student Association Conference. The meeting offered something for everyone, featuring more than 300 hours of diverse education opportunities, an exhibit hall chock full of new and essential optical toys, and the AOA House of Delegates session. The event enabled leaders in the profession to envision and support the future of Optometry.

Joining the AOA is vital for Optometrists because it amplifies our collective voice on the national level. The AOA regularly advocates for fair working conditions, scope-of-practice

protections and health care policies that support Optometrists across all modalities. Membership also provides access to clinical resources, continuing education and a network of peers — all of which can empower ODs in all settings to advance their careers and elevate patient care.

Together with the massive efforts of state affiliates, the AOA continues to fight on behalf of Optometrists. Advocacy for the profession constitutes a generous 23% of the organization's budget, making it easily the largest expense item. Regardless of your practice modality, if you bill any insurance plans,







From Left to right: Amy A. Puerto, OD (LA), new trustee; Tad R. Kosanovich, OD (FL); Paul M. Barney, OD (AK); Curtis A. Ono, OD (WA), secretary-treasurer; Terri A. Gossard, OD, MS (OH), vice president; Jacqueline "Jacquie" M. Bowen, OD (CO), president; Teri K. Geist, OD (NE), president-elect; Steven T. Reed, OD (MS), immediate past president; Marrie S. Read, OD, MBA (Armed Forces Optometric Society), re-elected trustee; Karoline L. Munson, OD (KY); Jon F. Pederson, OD (CO), new trustee.

you have likely benefitted from these efforts. The AOA is fighting for every dollar owed to doctors, pushing for doctors to get paid for improperly denied YAG procedures; reversing inappropriate contract terminations; removing doctors from unjust downcoding programs; and addressing credentialing problems, claim delays and coverage inconsistencies.

In fact, recent AOA advocacy efforts have helped to return more than \$7.5 million to ODs in less than 24 months. And the battle continues, as state and national efforts work to address the unfair practices and policies of Vision Benefit Managers (VBM)s, which wield heavy influence over insurance claims. Again, if you bill any insurance plan, you have likely felt pressure from VBMs.

So, what can you do to help advance the profession? Choose to be involved and engaged in your profession. Join the AOA and your state affiliate, and be an active participant working for change.

Also, be on the lookout for an upcoming report, "Glucagon-like Peptide-1 [GLP-1] Receptor Agonists and Ocular Health: Guidance for Optometric Practice," from the AOA Evidence-based Optometry Committee regarding potential concerns for your patients on GLP-1 meds. As with any new and exciting change in health care, these new treatments come with side effects — which for the eye

care profession include non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION), increased risk of diabetic retinopathy, and neovascular age-related macular degeneration. The upcoming report will include Optometry-related guidelines for care of this growing group of patients.

In closing, I'd like to share a story and a few thoughts about what makes our profession so strong. On my way back from a previous AOA meeting, while headed to meet my family in the Poconos for vacation, I was stuck in St. Louis during a winter storm. Talking with a fellow OD at the St. Louis airport, I mentioned to him (jokingly and without any intent to offend) that the airline was going to reroute me through "the armpit of America." He asked me what city I was referring to, and I replied, "Oh, I work there!"

**Refresh®**  
Lubricant Eye Drops

## One Drop. 10+ Hour Dry Eye Relief.\*<sup>2</sup>

**Nourishes & Protects Tears from Evaporating**

**The ONLY drop enriched with Flaxseed Oil<sup>1</sup>, antioxidants<sup>1</sup>, and HydroCell® technology**

[refresheyedrops.com/doc](https://refresheyedrops.com/doc)

\*Results may vary. <sup>1</sup>Inactive ingredients.  
1. Data on file, AbbVie, Inc. REF-113774. 2. Data on file, AbbVie, Inc. REF-136415.  
© 2025 AbbVie. All rights reserved. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.  
US-RFS-250042 05/25

# Upgrade to Maestro2

## Now with OCTA!

Trade in your existing Maestro and get up to **\$10,000<sup>1</sup>** toward your purchase of Maestro2 with OCTA<sup>2</sup>



### KEY FEATURES



EHR Connectivity



OCTA<sup>3</sup>



Advanced Robotics

1. Trade-in amount will vary based on age, usage and instrument condition
2. US Market only
3. Optional feature

©2025 Topcon Healthcare | [topconhealthcare.com](https://topconhealthcare.com)

**TOPCON** Healthcare

Despite my embarrassment, he graciously offered me a place to stay overnight if I got stuck in the airport. That encounter helped me understand what the “Optometry family” is all about. The generosity of the friend in this story, Bob Layman (who has since served in the AOA leadership and as AOA president), is not unique among those in our profession. I have known countless others over the years, both in practice and professional leadership, who have shown that same spirit. We are blessed that these traits are well represented among the AOA leadership and staff, and I continue to find Optometrists to be some of the kindest, most generous people.

As we now have a fresh group of graduates joining the Optometry family, I want to encourage all of you, young and old alike, to connect with one another. Sometimes we get so tied up in our workload that we don’t take the time to engage with our peers. And while online CE is certainly convenient, in-person meetings like those hosted by AOA and AACO are golden opportunities to foster new relationships. To new graduates, don’t be afraid to reach out and meet your new peers. And to active ODs, try to remember what it was like when you were just starting out and had a limited network. Relationships make us stronger — both as individual ODs and as a profession — and working together to protect and advance Optometry is truly its own reward.

# AACO™

American Association of Corporate Optometrists™

## Join us on social media to get valuable information delivered the way YOU want it.



@AACOeyes



American Association of  
Corporate Optometrists



@AACOeyes



@AACOeyes

# Welcome to the Peg Board!



**Peg Densmore, Ed.S**

**AACO would like to extend** its sincere thanks to our Gold Level Corporate Sponsor, Bausch + Lomb, for sponsoring this print issue of Corporate Optometrist. Special thanks go out to Mr. Joe Flowers with Bausch + Lomb for making this issue possible.

Wow! I can't believe 2025 is already half over — time is absolutely flying by. I hope everyone is as excited about this year's AACO Annual Conference as I am. If you haven't made your plans to join us, please go to our website and register TODAY!

Once again, we will have the nation's top ODs presenting at this year's conference. Dr. Laureen Waldron will kick off the conference Friday morning with her presentation on "Interventional Glaucoma." Dr. Tim Earley will then present a course on age-related macular degeneration and another on managing vitreous pathology. Dr. Paul Adjajian will present "Mitigating Malpractice: A Comprehensive Guide for Optometrists," followed by Dr. Robert "Bob" Houghteling's presentation, "The United States Sugar Epidemic." Dr. Paul Ajajian will end the day with Georgia Jurisprudence.

Dr. Murray Fingeret will kick off Saturday morning with three courses on glaucoma. Dr. Steven Sorkin will then present two courses: one on oral medications and another on anterior segment imaging/testing. The day will conclude with Dr. Alice Sterling's course on Florida Jurisprudence.

This year's annual conference will be held August 22-23, 2025, in the Hostess City of the South, Savannah, GA, at the Hyatt Regency — which is located right on the Savannah River and the city's famed River Street! Please note: The last day to receive the group rate for hotel rooms is July 29. We look forward to seeing you there!



**Ms. Densmore** is in her second year as executive director of AACO. She has 20 years of experience as an educator, coach, athletic director and assistant principal. She is a member of the Ellijay Lions Club and currently resides in Ellijay, GA, the "Apple Capital of Georgia." When not working at AACO, Peg enjoys gardening and spending time on the Cartecay River with her family and friends. She is a "Dog Mom" to Ollie.

Where  
**technology  
& comfort**  
intersect<sup>\*</sup>

ACUVUE® brand contact lenses are unbeaten in comfort in 47 clinical studies as posted on [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) - 22 of which were conducted by our competitors.<sup>†</sup>

Scan the QR code to learn what makes ACUVUE® different.



**ACUVUE®**

\* Subjective Comfort data has not been collected for ACUVUE® Abiliti® Overnight.

† Clinical trial results posted on ClinicalTrials.gov, a website maintained by the NIH, were reviewed as of April 30, 2024. The 47 clinical trials evaluated subjective comfort as a primary or secondary endpoint for the ACUVUE® OASYS Brand family (including daily disposable families), the 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST Brand family (within the category of hydrogel daily disposable), and the ACUVUE® VITA® Brand family, vs. competitors' products.

For Important Safety Information, visit [jovisionpro.com/jsi](http://jovisionpro.com/jsi) | 2024PP16221

# AACO BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025



**Carla Gavilanes Gasparini, OD**  
*President*



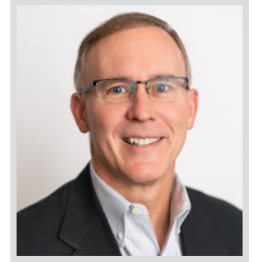
**Laureen Waldron, OD**  
*Vice President*



**Andre Lenoir, OD**  
*Treasurer*



**Donna Goukler, OD**  
*Secretary*

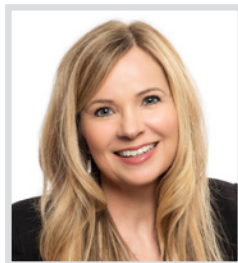


**Robert Houghteling, OD, FAAO**  
*Immediate Past President*

## Directors at Large



**Jennifer Bodley, OD**  
*Director at Large*



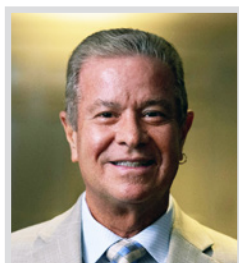
**Melonie Clemmons, OD**  
*Director at Large*



**Mark Jackson, OD, Dipl. ABO**  
*Director at Large*



**Carla Lindsay, OD**  
*Director at Large*



**Gordon Penn, OD**  
*Director at Large*



**John Womack, OD**  
*Director at Large*



**Peg Densmore, Ed.S.**  
*Executive Director*

306 Riveredge Drive, Ellijay GA 30536 | 470-684-AACO (2226) or 770-815-4519

[www.aacoeyes.org](http://www.aacoeyes.org)

# eureka!™ is the most affordable lens family at Walmart



**exceptional all-day  
comfort\***



**consistently  
clear vision\***



**95-98% moisture  
maintained for a full  
16 hours<sup>1</sup>**

**prescribe the lenses with exceptional performance,  
exclusively available at Walmart Vision Centers**

\*Results from clinical studies of nesofilcon A daily disposable and samfilcon A monthly replacement contact lenses.

REFERENCE: 1. Walmart Private Label Team, data on file.

©2025 Walmart Stores Inc. or its affiliates. PRL.0035.USA.25

**eureka!™**

# the most affordable daily lenses at Walmart



**lens material that  
locks in and retains  
moisture**



**comfort throughout  
the day\***



**designed to help  
reduce halos and glare,  
even in low light**

**prescribe eureka!™ daily lenses to your patients,  
exclusively available at Walmart Vision Centers**

\*Results from clinical studies of nesofilcon A daily disposable contact lenses.

©2025 Walmart Stores Inc. or its affiliates. PRL.0033.USA.25

**eureka!™**