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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **VOLUNTEERS RESTORE SIGHT IN SANTA BARBARA**

SANTA BARBARA, California – August 10, 2009 – On Saturday, August 15, SEE International is coordinating a free eye-surgery clinic at Santa Barbara’s Cottage Hospital to give nine people sight-restoring surgeries. The nine patients are at the top of a long list of Santa Barbara County residents who need eye surgery but do not have health insurance or the financial ability to access medical care.

“We believe that everyone has a right to sight,” said Dr. George Primbs, M.D., SEE International’s chairman of the board. “The people of Santa Barbara have a long history of helping each other, and that tradition is a big part of how this clinic came together.” A SEE International eye-surgery clinic takes months to plan and requires many volunteers and sponsors. For Saturday’s clinic, surgical services are being donated by Dr. Michael Paveloff, Dr. Stuart Winthrop, Dr. Toni Meyers, Dr. Wilson Wu, and Dr. Mark Silverberg. Dr. Howard Sprang is donating his services as an anesthesiologist, and an entire team of surgical staff consisting of: Elizabeth Link, Mary Ann Landgraff, Tammy Nguyen, Vicky Diaz, Laura Jacobson, Diane Chappell, Nancy Keller, Juanita Gonzalez, Lynn Donovan, Christine Owens, Armineh Oroujian, Patti Lobenberg, Claire Shoemaker, Denise Holmes, Karen Pankratz, Sophia Franklin, Teresa Courtney, and Elsa Hernandez who will be giving up their Saturday to provide services. The facility and infrastructure is being provided by the Stewart and Louisa MacDougall Eye Center of Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. All necessary medical supplies are being donated by Alcon Labs, Cardinal Health and AMO. The Santa Barbara Neighborhood clinics, a collaborative partner organization is providing the required medical exams for the patients in need.

The nine patients who will receive treatment at the free clinic have severe vision impairment and need cataract or strabismus surgeries. The following two profiles of patients who will be helped at SEE International’s clinic on Saturday are typical of the people SBVC serves every day.



Jack Wilson is a 57-year-old man with advanced cataracts in both eyes and no health insurance. Last December Mr. Wilson lost his job because his cataracts had affected his vision so much he could not renew his driver's license. Since then Mr. Wilson's vision has declined to the point that he has trouble crossing the street. Since he cannot see the traffic signals, he waits until the cars idling next to him at the intersection start moving across the street. "I would rather die than live like this," he says of his diminishing sight. "Before I came to SEE, I thought it was a lost cause."

Maria Castro is a 40-year-old woman who works as a housekeeper and has had strabismus (this causes loss of muscle control and the eye to point in a different direction) since childhood. Ms. Castro had strabismus surgery with SEE in May 2008, but she still requires more work done. Her employment does not provide health insurance, and Ms. Castro has been living in a shelter for the past two months.

SEE International is a local nonprofit organization founded in 1974 to restore sight to the blind around the world. In the 1980s, SEE responded to a growing need at home by creating the Santa Barbara Vision Care (SBVC) program. SBVC serves Santa Barbara County residents by offering free comprehensive eye exams for all children and adults without health insurance or the financial resources for medical care. Most of the patients served are in households that earn less than \$20,000 annually.

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Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE) International was founded in Santa Barbara in 1974 to provide worldwide medical, surgical, and educational services through volunteer ophthalmic surgeons with the primary objective of restoring sight and transforming lives. In 2008 SEE International provided over 10,000 sight-restoring surgeries in 37 countries.

**On the day of the clinic, please call Natalia Ramirez at (323)708-0319**, or during regular business hours contact Kim Welton, General Manager, at SEE International at (805) 963-3303 or [kim.seeintl.org](http://kim.seeintl.org). Visit our web site at [www.seeintl.org](http://www.seeintl.org).