

Press Release:

Essilor and Optometry Giving Sight Announce Student Loans in Malawi

(Denver CO: April 11th, 2017). Essilor of America and Optometry Giving Sight have announced the recipients of study loans for students of Optometry at Mzuzu University in Malawi, Africa.

The loans will cover full tuition and living costs for the 5 years of the Bachelor of Vision Science, commencing in this Academic Year.

“It’s a great feeling to know that we are helping students in emerging countries such as Malawi to become degree qualified Optometrists,” said Dr. Howard Purcell, Senior Vice President, Customer Development Group, Essilor of America. “These loans will ensure that economically disadvantaged students are able to complete their studies and then provide urgently needed vision care services to women, men and children in their local communities.”

Dr. Purcell visited the program in November 2015 and was highly impressed with the School of Optometry, which was established in 2009 and has so far produced 35 graduates. There are currently 71 students enrolled in the program.

“It was a humbling experience to see how challenging life can be in a country like Malawi, but inspiring to witness the commitment and dedication of the students and their teachers,” Dr. Purcell added. “These loans will ensure that more students are able to realize their dreams and will help to build the profession of Optometry in the country.”

The recipients of the Student Loans are (pictured from left to right) : Adson Mitochi, Mariam Aliya, Gibson Nkhwekwe, Kettie Lozario, Tambuzai Liyo, and Thandiwe Nyirenda.

The Optometry Development program in Malawi is an initiative of the Brien Holden Vision Institute, Mzuzu University, Malawi College of Health Sciences and Optometry Giving Sight. The current Head of School at Mzuzu University is Dr. Sara McGowan, a graduate of UAB.

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Optometry Giving Sight is the only global fundraising initiative that specifically targets the prevention of blindness and impaired vision due to uncorrected refractive error (URE) – simply the need for an eye examination and glasses. It was established in 2003 by the Brien Holden Vision Institute, World Council of Optometry, and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness as a means of mobilizing support from the global eye care profession and industry to help eliminate the backlog of people who are needlessly blind or vision impaired – currently estimated at more than 600 million worldwide. It is a registered charity in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Ireland, and Italy. www.givingsight.org