



**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE:**
October 19, 2020

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****MEDIA ADVISORY****

Helen Keller Intl Partners with Isaacs Center to Provide Critical Vision Care and Eyeglasses to Older Adults

Yorkville, New York, NY – Helen Keller Intl and Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center (Isaacs Center) have partnered to provide vision screenings and exams, as well as prescription eyeglasses and vouchers for additional more advanced care to older adults in the Yorkville community.

As the COVID-19 public health crisis continues to disproportionately impact low income communities and vulnerable older adults, Isaacs Center has seen a dramatic increase in the need for community access to on-site health services. Prior to the pandemic, nearly half of the older adults served through Isaacs Center programs and services lived at or below the poverty line, with 62% of those served indicating making tough financial decisions between food, rent, and medical care. With new and increasing needs throughout the surrounding neighborhood, thoughtful interventions with community partners such as Helen Keller Intl support Isaacs Center's ability to provide critical access to health services.

According to the *American Academy of Family Physicians*, approximately one in three elderly people experience vision reduction or eye disease by age 65.¹ Eye health can also impact holistic physical and mental health for seniors, who may experience slips and falls that otherwise could be mitigated by clear vision. Further, the *American Optometric Association* recommends yearly eye exams, and yet, Medicare does not cover the cost of routine eye exams for low-income seniors.²

Despite the fact that clear vision is a fundamental healthcare need, approximately 12 million adults in the U.S. suffer from some form of uncorrected refractive error, including nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism. While refractive error is easily corrected with a pair of prescription eyeglasses, the cost of an eye exam and a pair of frames can be prohibitively high for many low-income individuals and families. Additional barriers to care, including transportation and wait-times at local clinics, can make accessing clear vision an insurmountable task. All barriers are now also exacerbated by the public health crisis.

"HKI at the Isaacs Center was excellent. I felt that the doctor was extremely professional and put me on the right path with my eye health. Having the clinic at Isaacs was very helpful because as a result of the pandemic my doctor is not available, and it would have been a great financial impact to make an appointment and get an exam and glasses elsewhere. Overall, I had an extremely positive experience," **said Margaretta Goines, Isaacs Center, Senior Center Member.**

¹ <https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-health-for-life/senior-vision?sso=y>

² <https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/eye-exams-routine>

"Our critical partnership with HKI has provided over 300 older adults with free vision screenings, optometrist exams and eyeglasses, many of whom would otherwise be entirely without necessary eye health services. During this unprecedented time of crisis, with so many struggling to access public health systems, we are immensely grateful to the leadership team and program staff at HKI for maintaining this invaluable connection to the Isaacs Center community," **said Gregory J. Morris, President and Executive Director, Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center.**

"Uncorrected vision conditions are among the biggest public health problems in the United States, and seniors are no exception. Clear vision plays a vital role not only in effecting a senior's quality of life, but in ensuring their physical health, especially in terms of fall and accident prevention," **said Meghan K. Lynch, Director of US Vision Programs at Helen Keller Intl.** "I am very thankful for our continued partnership with Isaacs Center, especially during this challenging time. This partnership – and those like it - are crucial to ensuring our NY Vision Program can provide critical and routine vision care to those that might not otherwise be able to access it."

Helen Keller Intl's NY Vision Program has been providing no-cost vision services to underserved communities since 1994, eliminating barriers to care including lack of transportation, limited insurance coverage, and prohibitive cost - so that those of any age can reach their full potential.

Since 1964, Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center has committed to its enduring mission to promote social and physical well-being and encourage self-reliance and dignity throughout every stage of life. Each year, Isaacs Center engages more than 6,000 vulnerable New Yorkers through educational programs for school aged children, supportive services and connections to educational and career pathways for at-risk young adults, as well as life sustaining meals and programs for older adults.