



# Agents of Change

VM celebrates women  
who make a difference

**BY MARY KANE**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**N**EW YORK—Women continue to leave their mark and make their voices heard in virtually every segment of the vision care field and optical arena. These women of optical fall into several special categories and wear many “hats” including executive, team builder, up-and-comer, and business entrepreneur.

Via networking, coaching as well as education, training and hard work, women are building careers and making contributions throughout every phase of the market and inter-

action with patients and customers.

In this 7th year of **Vision Monday's** highly-anticipated Annual “Most Influential Women’s” report, we continue with the new approach inaugurated in last year’s Special Report. We widened the scope of women we continue to recognize, who make leadership contributions throughout the ECP, retail, supplier, lab, managed care and association landscape.

So we solicited nominations and organized our honorees in four arenas:

• **Executive Suite:** Candidates are women who hold the positions of president, CEO, CFO, CMO,

CIO or COO that guide their companies forward, inspire leadership among their teams and peers and achieve high performance.

• **Mentors:** Candidates are women who are team builders, developers of talent, who via example or education and training successfully influence others to learn and to grow in their business or professional acumen.

• **Rising Stars:** Candidates are women who are “up-and-comers” in their careers and within their companies or arenas within the industry; sharp talents who are on their way toward higher levels of

responsibility and influence.

• **Innovators:** Candidates are women who have initiated new product developments or special programs in the arena of marketing, technology or retail, who have spearheaded innovative business ideas or enterprises.

We hope you enjoy reading their profiles of accomplishment as **VM** celebrates women who make a difference in this challenging and ever-changing world of optical.

Please visit [www.visionmonday.com](http://www.visionmonday.com) to review an alphabetical listing of past year’s honorees and to read prior years’ Special Reports. —*The Editors.*

## EXECUTIVE SUITE

WOMEN WHO HOLD THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT, CEO, CFO, CIO OR COO

## JILL ALBRINCK

**Chief Operating Officer**  
LensCrafters  
Mason, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She is highly strategic and driven toward customer-centric innovation.”



Jill Albrinck moved into her current position as chief operating officer for Luxottica Retail's LensCrafters chain in late May; previously she spent four years with Luxottica Retail in strategic roles. Most recently, she was the company's senior vice president, strategy and marketing, responsible for strategic planning and marketing for all of the company's retail brands as well as for EyeMed Vision Care and Luxottica Retail's manufacturing operations.

Prior to that, Albrinck spent 10 years with a management consulting firm, then worked on a corporate turnaround in Cincinnati, where she met Kerry Bradley, president of Luxottica Retail North America. Shortly thereafter, Albrinck joined the optical retail giant.

In her new position as LensCrafters' chief operating officer, she sees her short-term challenge as dealing with the country's current economic woes and what they mean to the consumer and to the optical chain. Longer term, Albrinck will be working to “leverage the strength of LensCrafters to continue to grow our business to fulfill its potential.”

**SHE SAYS...**“I think being a women in today's optical business is no different in terms

of opportunities from being a man. I look at the world through gender-blind eyes, and feel the world looks at me the same way.”

## JULIE METZGER AUBUCHON, OD

**Owner**  
Metzger Eye Care  
Florence, Ky.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“An established leader known for her teamwork, communication and dedication.”



Aubuchon's father, an optometrist with an active history in Kentucky, was president of the board of examiners, head of the state's optometric association and served 50 years with Lion's Club in addition to his role as city council member and vice-mayor.

That commitment is reflected in Aubuchon's work as owner of the Metzger practice and her own extensive activities. She is the Kentucky Optometric Association's president-elect, serving on numerous committees and four years on the board of the group's Foundation. She was first elected to the City of Florence's City Council in November 1988 and won six subsequent elections. She's chairman of the city's planning and zoning committee, serving as the city's representative on the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, is past chairman of the Boone County Citizen Corps Council and is a member of the Boone County Health Department Board.

During 2003, she served as National Chaplain, and in 2004 served as Chief of Staff and was elected in 2005 as the 85th National President of the U.S. Junior Chamber. That work took her to almost all 50 states and several foreign countries as an ambassador for young leaders in service to their communities. Aubuchon is a featured speaker and trainer. She lives with her husband Pat, past president of the Missouri

Jaycees, and their son Brady in Florence, Ky.

**SHE SAYS...**“Thrive on what you can learn next. My father, first and foremost, is my biggest mentor; and Darlene Eakins, executive director of the KOA has enormous passion for optometry. Build coalitions and be involved in your community—because it's the right thing to do.”

## HEATHER BALESTER

**President**  
Balester Optical Co.  
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“With her leadership and guidance, our company has grown over the years. With her at the head, we have won such titles as Essilor IDD lab, Crizal Award of Excellence, Transitions Lab of the Year and Premium Materials Awards of Excellence from Essilor.”



Balester was born into the optical lab business. In 1949, her father and mother were traveling throughout Pennsylvania, upstate New York, and New Jersey, building a customer base for Balester Optical, a wholesale lab founded by her grandfather, Fred Balester, Sr. As she tells it, “When I came along, they simply put me in a baby basket in the back seat and took me with them. We traveled together on and off until I was five and it was time to start school.”

When Balester was 16, she started working as a lens clerk in the stockroom. Since then, Balester has worked in nearly every part of the lab, “except the ones that require ‘hands,’ which I rather notoriously lack,” she said with a laugh. In 1970, she created a customer service department, which remained her “home” until she assumed the role of president in 2000.

Balester is proud of the fact that the lab is “still in business, still growing and getting better, and still independent after 75 years.”



SHE SAYS...“We help people see—isn’t that an incredible gift? Every single lens we grind, treat, or finish will make a positive difference in the quality of life for someone, somewhere.”

**JANET BENJAMIN**

**CEO/Co-Owner**  
Laramy-K Optical  
Indianola, Ind.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She’s committed to a personalized service that isn’t often seen in today’s acquisition-riddled optical world.”

With 38 years of experience in the optical lab business, Janet Benjamin commands the respect of both her customers and colleagues. She began working at Milton Roy when she



was 19, later moving to Lens Tech in Florida, B&L, Pioneer Optics and finally Laramy-K, an uncut lab which she founded 20 years ago with her husband Jack.

As CEO of Laramy-K, Benjamin manages a staff of 22 employees. She loves her job “because every day is different... because I know I’m making people’s lives better by helping them see.” Laramy-K is known for its excellent customer service, and Benjamin still answers the phones and takes orders every day. She takes pride in the fact that at least 10 of Laramy-K’s customers have been with the lab from the day it opened for business.

Having witnessed the great strides women have made in optical in recent years, Benjamin believes women will continue to influence the industry “with loyalty and integrity...not to

mention, impeccable taste.”

SHE SAYS...“People who strive to make a difference inspire me, from the staff I work with every day to our customers, who believe in opticianry as a craft, not just a profession.”

**LYNDA JOHNSON**

**Owner and Practice Administrator**  
Artisan Optics  
Boise, Idaho



CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She and her husband have built Artisan Optics from the ground up and now have two very successful locations despite not using any traditional advertising.”



Congratulations

Michelle Skinner

Regional Vice President, Altair

Honored as one of Vision Monday’s Most Influential Women in the Optical Industry.

We thank you for your Vision and Leadership at Altair.



## EXECUTIVE SUITE

"I know I am supposed to say something profound, but the truth is, I was drafted by my husband into the optical industry after he began the practice in 1991," admitted Lynda Johnson of Artisan Optics. "The practice had grown to the point that there simply wasn't enough time in the day for him to see patients and manage the practice, so I became interested."

Today, Johnson oversees and manages the day-to-day operations of the now two-location strong practice, which includes their optometric physician and all medical functions of the practice, the optical boutiques, an onsite surfacing and finishing lab, the developmental and vision therapy departments and the onsite refractive surgery division.

That may seem like a lot for one woman but in addition to a dedicated staff, Johnson already has relief lined up. "Our son is cur-

rently attending Southern California College of Optometry," added Johnson. "Our daughter is completing her undergraduate degree and also considering a career in optometry. We're already putting systems in place to help facilitate the transition of our practice to the next generation."

**SHE SAYS...** "Enter the industry as an equal. Step in with confidence. Commit to self improvement and education and always remember it is our patients who sign our paychecks."

**KAREN KEENEY****President and Owner**

Chadwick Optical Inc.  
White River Junction, Vt.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Karen has guided her

company in a major leap forward by re-inventing her small optical lab to service the visually impaired and their eyecare providers...She has inspired her staff and developed a team of engineers to create new concepts in lens design."



Keeney began her career at American Optical, having been inspired by her grandfather who overcame a visual impairment to become a small business entrepreneur. She

also credits several mentors, including AO's John Chadwick, for whom Keeney's lab is named, as well as her mother, Jane Keeney.

In 2003, Keeney was awarded a National Eye Institute grant for nearly \$500,000, the first known NIH grant to be awarded to an optical laboratory. It

*Congratulations*  
**Congratulations**  
*Congratulations*



Marchon Eyewear congratulates **Debbie Fink**, a true **Innovator**, on her recognition among Vision Monday's 2009 Most Influential Women in Optical

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most influential  
women in optical

was used to develop functional, low cost lenses for people suffering from hemianopia, a type of blindness caused by head trauma, stroke or brain tumors.

Three years ago, she was awarded a second-phase grant of \$750,000, which has allowed Chadwick Optical to continue a collaboration with the Schepens Eye Research Institute, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, to further refine the first glasses to significantly improve quality of vision and life for sufferers of hemianopia.

Under Keeney's direction, Chadwick Optical also provides eyewear to people in third-world countries who cannot afford to purchase it.

**SHE SAYS...**"I am inspired by the statement 'It can't be done.' I have an insatiable desire to solve problems, take on challenges and do the seemingly impossible. My mentors are those who come to me with impossible problems. They are my teachers."

## CANDY SIMERSON

**President/COO**  
Minnesota Eye Consultant  
Bloomington, Minn.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**"She understands how ophthalmology, optometry and opticianry depend on each other's skills to bring patients the best possible solutions for their eyecare needs."



An industry veteran with more than 25 years of management experience, Simerson got her start as a contact lens fitter. She served as the administrator for Eye Physicians & Surgeons in Edina, Minn. for over 15 years.

For the past decade, Simerson has headed

Minnesota Eye Consultant, the largest independent MD/OD practice in Minnesota, with 12 locations and close to 200 employees. She served on the American Society of Ophthalmic Administrators Governing Board of Directors for 15 years, and was president from 1997 to 1999. She also served on the national board for the Certification of Ophthalmic Executives for nine years.

Currently, she serves on the executive committee of Minnesota Medical Group Management Association and will be president for a one-year term beginning October 2009. She just completed a certificate program in Advanced Health Care Management at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minn.

**SHE SAYS...**"My favorite quote comes from Abraham Lincoln: 'The best way to predict your future is to create it.'"

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For 20 years Nanofilm has been the leader in lens care, with millions of users around the world. That's because Jodi Groh formulates pure innovation. The highest ratings for cleaning and safety. The first towelettes. High-fashion packaging. Education for ECPs. Education for consumers. Helping professionals and patients on every continent. **Congratulations, Jodi. And thanks.**

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## RISING STARS WOMEN WHO ARE "UP-AND-COMERS" IN THEIR CAREERS AND COMPANIES

### TERESA BRYANT

#### Sales Manager

Indiana Ophthalmics  
Indianapolis, Ind.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Teresa began working in the lab doing dyeing and stocking, eventually becoming a salesperson calling on accounts. Two years ago, she became the sales manager and in January of this year, took over the responsibility of replacing the lab’s computer system. After this assignment, Teresa intimately knows the operations of the company and is well prepared to fulfill any position within Indiana Ophthalmics.”



It would be an understatement to call Teresa Bryant a people person. “I enjoy working with people. I love the satisfaction of personal relationships with my accounts. What makes my

job rewarding is when I get that call on a Saturday morning thanking me for making their life easier,” said Bryant.

Starting out in the customer service department at Indiana Ophthalmics in 1990, Bryant began making sales calls servicing accounts five years later. Besides calling on accounts, she was responsible for accounts receivables and monthly statements. Today, she is the sales manager for the Indianapolis-based wholesale laboratory and just finished installing a new computer system and software package for the company including all the data entry—customer information, manufacturers, lenses and frames—plus setting up the accounting side of the system.

“The most important part of my job is making sure each account feels like they are number one,”

said Bryant. “My accounts know they can call on me anytime.”

SHE SAYS...“Today, you see more women as lab owners and in management positions in the industry. Women have proven themselves in these positions, but whatever position you have now, do it as well as you possibly can.”

### CHRISTINE CAMSUZOU

#### General Manager Optical Materials

PPG Industries  
Monroeville, Pa.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Christine has transformed PPG Optical Materials into a major, diversified participant and resource in the optical industry.”



As a child, a misdiagnosed eye condition led a doctor to predict that Camsuzou would soon lose her vision. Although the condition proved to be merely a mild case of astigmatism, the shock of being told from one day to another that she could be blind as well as the following shock of witnessing wild discrepancies in diagnostic procedures were “a learning moment” for her.

So it’s no surprise that as head of PPG’s Optical Materials Group, she is committed to improving the level of competency and knowledge in the eyecare profession through education. She has accelerated a strategy to influence PPG’s partners at all levels of the value chain, either through meetings or education.

Throughout her 23 years at PPG, Camsuzou has held a succession of management positions in finance, strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions, corporate quality. Her international postings have included Paris, the U.K., Mexico, Torrance and, most recently, Pittsburgh. A native of France, she not only speaks French but English, Spanish and Italian as well.

SHE SAYS...“Fashion has a strong influence in patient decisions in terms of eyewear, often more than they realize. Educating the eyecare professional so he or she can educate the patient about the lens is the challenge as well as the opportunity.”

### ERIN DURHAM

#### Director of Frame Merchandising

National Vision, Inc.  
Lawrenceville, Ga.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She has a great eye for fashion and style and is very adept at managing vendors. In a short time, she has improved efficiency and profitability.”



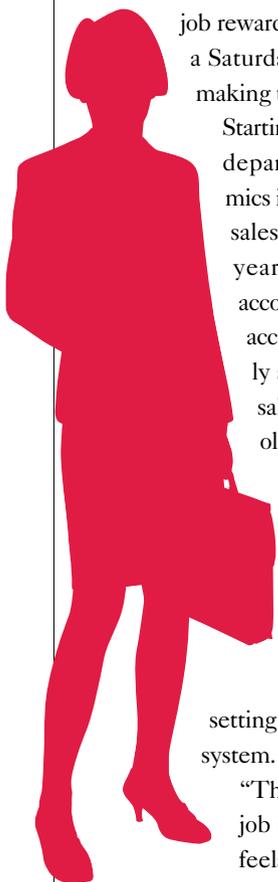
“I wanted to try my hand at something totally different from the department store apparel industry, which is my background, and get involved in something where I could use my love of fashion in a creative way,” said Erin Durham when asked about why she joined National Vision two years ago.

But switching her category focus wasn’t without its challenges for Durham. “The initial challenge was to learn the product and the suppliers; and at the same time all about National Vision and its place in the industry; all the while applying my fashion sense to the product selection. It has been a very rewarding challenge.”

But she isn’t content to rest on her laurels now, as a rapidly growing business—the company just added 63 new stores with the acquisition of Eyeglass World in Florida—there is still much to achieve at the more than 500 location strong National Vision chain.

“I think as my experience increases I would like to become involved in other creative areas of the company,” concluded Durham

SHE SAYS...“As long as you love what you do and do it well, you will be successful, whatever the industry.”



## RISING STARS

### JENNILYN DUTSON

#### Director of Store Operations

Standard Optical  
Salt Lake City, Utah

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She offers quantitative analysis in a retail environment combined with extraordinary, charismatic leadership skills.”



Dutson is new to the optical industry, joining Standard Optical last year after a career in the banking industry. She manages Standard's 18 retail offices, a laser center and a medical eyecare facility, and has implemented new cost controls and leadership supervision to the stores across the state.

During her time at Wells Fargo, where she started as a teller, she progressed to banker posts, into business and investment banking and then into management when she was tapped to join Standard.

All store merchandising and store operations, including corporate trainers and a business development person, now work with Dutson who has been building new processes for accountability and regular communications with all managers and their teams. She also travels to stores regularly.

“My standards are fierce, and my whole objective is to teach all of the managers how to be successful running an optical store by managing sales and managing their employees well.

“I'm very grateful to my mentors in management at Wells Fargo and I'd like to cite Stephen and Aaron Schubach and the team here for their attention and support in helping me learn a new industry. Our work is exciting and rewarding.”

**SHE SAYS...**“Be strong and know who you are.”

### ALLISON FANGER

#### Manager of Office Operations

Midland Optical  
St. Louis, Mo.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Allison oversees five departments and 61 employees and has exceptionally strong leadership, communications and interpersonal relationship skills.”



Although only in her mid-twenties Allison Fanger has called Midland Optical home for the past 11 years, starting with her part-time stints while still in high school to her current position as manager of office operations.

Through the years, Fanger has worked in almost every department including accounting, customer service, data entry, stockroom, surfacing, mailroom and delivery. Today, she oversees all those departments, in addition to her payroll and human resources duties.

Fanger admitted her greatest challenge is making sure Midland hires the right people and pre-screens applicants by weighing their technical skills with their ability to work with the rest of the Midland “team.”

She feels she makes a difference because the supervisors in each department know that they can come to her, not just to get a problem resolved, but to actually get in and help out. But the number one reason Fanger loves her job is the family atmosphere at Midland. “Everyone here really cares about each other, which I think is unusual to find in a company of 200 employees.”

**SHE SAYS...**“What inspires me to be better is my boss, Matt Iovaldi. Seeing how hard he works, how much he cares for each of his employees and his overall enthusiasm for the optical industry inspires me to learn more, do more and work harder.”

### HEATHER FIGUEROA

#### General Manager

West Coast Lens  
Yorba Linda, Calif.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Heather's function at West Coast Lens is part technician, part therapist. She has been able to focus her energies on improving everyone under her...teaching her team that strength is not built from one's successes, but learning from failure.”



Heather Figueroa heads up the team of employees at West Coast Lens and lets her desire to succeed and break new ground lead the way. She started in the business 11 years ago at Texas State Optical in Wichita Falls and in 2006, moved to Scottsdale, Ariz., to work for The Optical Shop of Aspen. She has both her ABO and NCLE certifications, as well as her Arizona State Dispensing Opticians license. Her technical, medical and team leading skills all converged in 2008 when she won Employee of the Year award from West Coast Lens, the same year she joined the company.

Currently, Figueroa oversees everything in the lab, including customer service and employee training and education.

In response to the downturn in the economy, Figueroa has led the charge to restructure and retool their production process and finishing capabilities. “Whereas we always processed our own lenses which were in a frame, now we are offering just finished lenses as well.” Her take on the economy: “you can look at how it hurt us or you can see where it can take us.”

**SHE SAYS...**“My inspiration comes from my desire to succeed and for the people around me to succeed as well. My father always told me it didn't matter what I did as long as I did it to the best of my ability.”

RISING STARS

**KELLY KERKSICK, OD**

**Director of Professional Services**  
 Vision Source LP  
 Houston, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE...” She is an exceptional role model for new graduates... one of the brightest optometric and business minds in the profession.”



Kerkick was fascinated by her first eye exam. The small-town native was the first on either side of her family to get a degree, attending the University of Missouri and Southern College of Optometry in Memphis. As a student, she worked with practitioner Joseph Ellis, OD, whose rural practice, philosophy and advice was inspirational to Kerkick. She chose to take over

a small practice in Columbia, Ill., with a population of 9,000, located about 25 minutes outside of St. Louis, in Illinois.

She spoke at the Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Institute, talking to students about optometry and practice choices, and for Bausch & Lomb, where she noted Michael Pier, OD encouraged her further. Addressing the Vision Source national meeting, she asked what could be done to engage the younger generation to embrace private practice. Now as director of professional services, Kerkick builds relationships with the schools and colleges of optometry. She is a charter member of the Women of Vision organization and has served as a clinical examiner for the National Board of Optometry.

She continues to speak around the country on various topics for Allergan, Alcon, Cooper, Ciba, Vistakon, EMR Logic, MaximEye and

others and is a proponent of the technology-savvy practice.

**SHE SAYS...**”The Vision Source team has been truly supportive....commercial practice is not your annuity, you don’t own it. You have to dig deeper for private practice, but you can do it.”

**KRISTEN McCABE**

**Director and Curator of Product**  
 Ilori, a division of Luxottica Retail  
 Mason, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE...”She has an unprecedented ability to forecast sunglass trends and identify product to meet these trends that is unique, fashionable and appropriate for the luxury consumer.”

Kristen McCabe’s entire career has been about

**Congratulations**

from the staff and management  
 of Balester Optical Company.



**Heather Balester**

*President*  
 Balester Optical Company  
 Executive Suite Award





the pursuit of merging two worlds — art and business. This pursuit was born in childhood thanks to her father, a corporate lawyer, who fostered her business,

analytical and practical side, while her mother, an interior decorator, nurtured the creative, visual side.

At Luxottica Retail, McCabe, director and curator of product for Ilori, found a position that makes that pursuit obtainable. “People are looking for unique, expressive eyewear that shows their personal style but eyewear had a very technical aspect to it,” said McCabe. “It combined my background of buying, brand building and trend identification and completely satisfies my left and right brain.”

But her current career has birthed a whole new

pursuit as well. “We’ve built the Ilori brand from the ground up and delivered on the vision with only a nine-person team, there will be 25 boutiques by the end of 2009, but the next step is global and international growth for Ilori,” concluded McCabe.

**SHE SAYS...** “Do not underestimate what you bring to the table, especially from other fields and experiences. Forget the traditional obstacles, have fun and take care of each other along the way.”

## TESHA PEEL

### Advertising Manager

Clarkson Eyecare  
Ellisville, Mo.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** “Tessa has written, produced and directed a completely new media

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campaign highlighting the 30th anniversary of the practice and is director of the not-for-profit Clarkson Eyecare Foundation.”



Peel has been in and out of optometrists’ offices her whole life due to several complications with her sight but it was her love of writing that led her to work in the

optical field without becoming an optometrist herself.

Peel began working for Clarkson Eyecare writing manuals but eventually took over responsibilities for all advertising and public relations for the growing practice, which now boasts 42 locations. “I really enjoy what I do—the constant changes in the economy challenges me to find new advertising ideas and promotions.”

**YOUNGER OPTICS**  
The Optical Lens Innovators

## Congratulations

*Candace O’Keefe*



*One of the most Influential Women in Optical today. Thanks for your continued efforts as an educator and mentor to many!*

From everyone at Younger Optics

## RISING STARS

She wears a very different yet equally important hat as director of The Clarkson Eyecare Foundation. Currently, the foundation has seven programs including three free vision clinics, a food pantry and direct access community outreach program, as well as World Vision mission trips, EyeGeneration, InfantSEE, and Season for Sight used glasses drives. “When I put a pair of glasses on a foundation patient and see their eyes light up because it is the first time they have ever seen clearly—it is truly amazing.”

**SHE SAYS...**“The president and chief office executive of Clarkson, Bill Jehling, is my mentor. He has been running a successful family owned/operated business for 30 years. I believe I am being mentored by the best and the company’s success proves that.”

**CATHY RAUSCHER**

**Associate Brand Manager,  
Global Marketing**  
Transitions Optical, Inc.  
Pinellas Park, Fla.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Guiding our agencies and our marketing team, Cathy helped to build the Transitions SOLFX brand identity, playing an extensive role in conducting research. We are certain that with her stellar background, enthusiasm, and quest for excellence, Cathy will continue to be a rising star in the Transitions organization.”

Starting 10 years ago with PPG Industries as a mechanical engineer, Cathy Rauscher transferred to Transitions Optical as a production



engineer, contributing to the organization through process development and engineering. When she had the opportunity to work in the North American marketing department she quickly developed a passion for marketing. She is now an associate global brand manager working on global education programs including programs for the Healthy Sight Institute.

Last year, Rauscher became involved in Transitions’ new sunwear business and is responsible for developing the Transitions SOLFX sun lens brand—growing awareness and demand for products that carry the brand through partnerships, marketing and education.

“I truly believe that sight and vision is priceless. Each of us in the optical industry have the ability to impact people’s sight, and the quality of their

## WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO...

Unparalleled quality and performance are the essence of Live Eyewear. These founding principles form a philosophy that requires both exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication. We congratulate Karen for being recognized by her peers for her remarkable commitment to the eyecare community, our customers and her colleagues. Her experience and vibrant enthusiasm has helped to manifest our vision of delivering world class OverRx eyewear and superior customer focus.



**KAREN ZAPPIA**  
Vice President of Sales, *Live Eyewear, Inc.*

**CONGRATULATIONS, KAREN!**

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lives every day—from providing services and products to eyecare and education—it may not be top of mind for everyone,” said Rauscher.

**SHE SAYS...**“My advice to other women entering the optical industry would be to never be afraid to try something new, even when it is uncomfortable—some of the most uncomfortable choices we make are where we grow and learn the most.”

## JENNIFER STEWART, OD

### Associate

Norwalk Eye Care  
Norwalk, Conn.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“An influential role model for women and students in the profession.”



Stewart has kept up the pace of her achievements since her first appearance in **Vision Monday** as the New England College of Optometry's outstanding student in the “Next Generation of Leadership: Class of 2007” report.

After graduation and work in New York with two private practices, she joined Norwalk Eye Care almost a year ago. A private practice run by Mark Feder, OD, she is now an associate in what she describes “as the most technologically-advanced practice I’ve ever seen.”

Stewart has been learning more about practice management and still maintains her love for sports vision, a passion of hers in school and one further fostered by her internship with sports vision specialist Donald Teague, OD. Stewart is the youngest member of the Worldwide Performance Vision Council for Vistakon and was named Member of the Month of Women of Vision.

She remains active herself in high-performance activities, and completed her first tria-

thon this spring and is training for four more as part of the Tri-Fitness group.

**SHE SAYS...**“I look forward to continuing to develop a special rapport with my patients.”

## JULIE WASHINGTON

### Vice President, Marketing

Pearle Vision  
Mason, Ohio

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Has led the repositioning of the Pearle Vision brand...vast marketing experience from other industries has allowed her to take a more innovative approach.”



After an earlier career in the consumer products arena with Procter & Gamble, Julie Washington joined Luxottica Retail in March 2008 as a marketing director. In her current role as vice president, marketing, for Luxottica's Pearle Vision chain, a key element of Washington's responsibilities is to help build a retail brand that meets the consumer's needs, while encouraging that consumer to choose Pearle over its competition.

“A key challenge is daily readiness and responsiveness to changing retail and economic conditions,” she said. “But at the same time, many things that are working well do not need to change that often.”

Washington works regularly with Pearle Vision's many stakeholders—its eyecare professionals, franchisees and associates as well as its customers—in making strategic plans for the chain. She and her team spend time out in the stores every quarter to see what's working and what might be improved, and conduct regular focus groups to get consumer input.

“Good marketing is always being aware of what's happening with the consumer in real time,” Washington said.

**SHE SAYS...**“I applaud and celebrate how the optical business has afforded opportunities for women, doing a better job than other industries in embracing and developing women.”

## KAREN ZAPPIA

### Vice President Sales

Live Eyewear  
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Karen has gone from bookkeeper/accounts to vice president of sales in 10 short years. She is effective in the corporate contract business and travels worldwide for product selection.”



Karen Zappia started her optical career with Fitovers Eyewear in 1997. When the company was launched, there were only two people, Kieran Hardy and Karen Zappia, and they had to share a computer in an office the size of a small bedroom.

As the company grew, Zappia realized she wanted to move into sales. She learned that selling something you really believed in was very rewarding. In June of 2001, Hardy and Zappia left Fitovers to start Live Eyewear. She began as the company's sales manager and in May 2008, was promoted to VP of sales, managing Live Eyewear's domestic and international business, overseeing the entire sales operation.

“At Live Eyewear, we have learned that by putting ourselves in our customers' shoes, everything else falls into place,” said Zappia. She makes a difference by participating in many associations, events and committees. A member of the OWA since 2003, she joined the board in 2008.

**SHE SAYS...**“Things will not come to you. If you sit around and wait for things to happen, you'll find that nothing much happens. You must go out and get what you want.”

➔ MORE

## MENTORS WOMEN WHO ARE TEAM BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS OF TALENT

### BARBARA W. BROWN, OD, FAAO

**Manager, Student and Special Services**  
University of Missouri-St. Louis  
College of Optometry  
St. Louis, Mo

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Dr. Brown is not only a mentor in optometry; she guides us through every aspect of school, from the entrance interview process before enrollment to the licensing process as we leave school and apply for jobs.”



There are two things that can always be found on Barbara Brown's desk: the class picture from 2005, the year she almost left the school, and a personal statement that reads “The reason I do what I do is the students—they are the reason I am here.”

Brown oversees recruitment, admissions, placement and scholarships for UMSL/Optom-etry, in addition to managing all student services and acting as a fundraising liaison.

The list of her professional accomplishments is almost as long as her job description: she's a member of the American Optometric Association (AOA), Heart of America Contact Lens Society, St. Louis Optometric Society, and a life member of the Missouri Optometric Foundation (MOF), where she was elected to the board in 2003 and has served as Secretary of the Board since.

When Brown entered optometry school there were only seven other women in her class yet her current student body is comprised of about half, or

more, women. “I love that women feel comfortable in the science and math areas of optics and optometry.”

**SHE SAYS...**“I am inspired by the entering class and the graduating class every year. I am inspired by their plans, dreams and their desire to become something different than they are today.”

### BARBARA BYRNE

**Customer Service Manager**  
Hoya Vision Care  
Lewisville, Texas

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Barbara's customer service background and years of service have afforded her the opportunity to train many people in the intricacies of customer care. I can attest to the fact that she always goes the extra mile to help customers and is truly a mentor for all who work for her. She leads by example.”



Barbara Byrne went to work right out of high school at International Optical in Dallas, Texas as a file clerk back when that meant using paper files and metal filing cabinets. From there, she worked as a customer service manager at Omega Optical. When her husband decided he wanted to retire and become a farmer, she worked in a small town as a city employee. “I couldn't wait to get back to the city and return to the optical business,” said Byrne.

As soon as Bill Benedict opened his new lab, Benedict Optical, Byrne jumped back into the optical business as a stockroom manager. “Getting out of the optical business is harder than getting a divorce,” Byrne laughed.

Hoya Vision Care bought Benedict Optical in 2003, where Byrne now works as a customer service manager in the Dallas location. Her responsibilities include hiring and training of

customer service personnel. As a mentor to others, Byrne shares ideas, goals, and work ethics with anyone that shows an interest in making the optical business their world.

**SHE SAYS...**“My first and most life altering mentor would have to be Bill Benedict. He took the opportunity to mold a willing and open mind. When I think back on all of the things I have learned, most of them were established early on in my life, by Bill.”

### SHIRLEY EARLEY

**Optician**  
Focal Pointe  
West Chester, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She has been an inspiration to opticians around the country.”



Shirley Earley has been an optician for nearly three decades, and has also played an important role in the Opticians Association of America (OAA) in recent years. She was elected the OAA's second vice president two years ago, and is expected to move up to first vice president in September when the OAA board elections are held during the 2009 National Opticians Convention in Cincinnati.

Earley joined Focal Pointe when Michael Lyons, OD, launched the practice last fall; before that, she spent 14 years with a multi-optometrist practice.

Earley has been active with the OAA for the past seven years. She began on the board of the Cincinnati-area opticians society, then moved to the state level.

After attending an OAA Leadership Conference, “my interest was jump-started, and I became excited about sharing ideas about what opticianry organizations can do to educate fellow opticians,” she recalled.

## MENTORS

**SHE SAYS...**“I’ve made it a point to be a mentor to others coming along, because our profession always needs fresh blood and new ideas. I believe in our profession, and I got involved in the OAA to give back—I want others to realize the future of opticianry is what you make it.”

### REBECCA FERTIG

#### President/Owner

Brahm & Powell Guild Opticians  
Alexandria, Va.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Becky followed her father into the industry, working with him for many years. She purchased Brahm & Powell more than 20 years ago and has built it into one of the premier practices in Northern Virginia.”



No one knows better than Becky Fertig that the road to success is not traveled alone. In 1993, she purchased Brahm & Powell Guild Opticians, a “flailing one-man business,” in Old Town Alexandria and turned it into a profitable practice that today employs four full-time opticians.

When Fertig started her business venture there were also “a few women in the field who owned their own business and that gave me hope,” she said. But Fertig is the first to admit she couldn’t have done it without her three long-time employees. “They treat the practice as if it was their own—you can’t ask for more support than that. I am so lucky to have wonderful employees.”

Today, Fertig’s main responsibility is overseeing the practice and seeing clients, but she has still managed to find the time to teach opticianry to students enrolled in the Virginia Apprenticeship Program for Opticians for many years. She has also served on the Board of Directors of the Opticians Association of Vir-

ginia and was honored as their Optician of the Year in April 2009.

**SHE SAYS...**“I feel the most important aspect of mentoring is to empower your employees by allowing them to make decisions and be a part of the business.”

### EMILY GELB

#### Vice President, Field Operations

Emerging Vision  
Garden City, N.Y.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Her intensely strong personality, commitment to the industry and dynamic enthusiasm serve as an exceptional influence.”



Emily Gelb began her career in optical at age 26, as a contact lens technician in an American Vision Centers store, then shifted to Cohen’s Fashion Optical, where she moved from store to store solving problems and providing sales strategies and training. After joining Emerging Vision’s Sterling Optical chain in 2000, Gelb started working in sales and then switched gears and went into training.

Today, she and her five-person team travel around to Emerging Vision’s more than 150 franchised and company-owned stores evaluating the stores’ operations, then developing action plans as needed to improve store performance—tackling everything from employee dress codes to cost of goods to lab work to marketing tools.

“We help our franchisees and store managers be better at their jobs, whatever it takes,” Gelb said. “It’s very important that we make a difference. And my days are never the same, which I really enjoy.”

**SHE SAYS...**“I’ve never heard what I can’t do as a woman in the optical business—I’ve only heard what I can do.”

### KRISTINA F. GREEN

#### Opticianry Program Director

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Richmond, Va.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Kristina Green has given a lot to the optical industry training opticians. Whenever there were budget cuts [at JSRC] she’s always stepped up to the plate and filled in.”



Kristina Green has two favorite duties when it comes to heading up the opticianry program at J. Sargeant Reynolds—the first is talking to perspective students about entering the field of opticianry and the second is volunteering as a marshal on graduation day to experience firsthand the fruits of her labors.

Green has been in opticianry for 14 years, but for the past 10, she has been director of the school’s opticianry program. Her responsibilities include the instruction and revision of all courses including ophthalmic optics, finishing laboratory, ophthalmic dispensing, contact lens theory, clinical, anatomy and physiology of the eye, and optical business management.

In addition to earning a Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Education, Green is an ABO-Master Optician and a Fellow of the Contact Lens Society of America.

She is passionate about spreading the message of the true value and need for formal education saying, “Today’s technological advances demand a higher level of

expertise. My personal belief is that opticianry will never reach the level of respect it deserves as an allied health profession without requiring formal education, licensure and continuing education.”

**SHE SAYS...**“We should never forget: Our clients deserve the very best vision correction possible and it is our duty to consider all the possible variables to design a product that fully meets, if not exceeds, their expectations.”

## ANGEL HULEN

**Vice President, Provider Solutions**  
OptumHealth Vision  
Indianapolis, Ind.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“A hands-on problem-solver...her ability to build an efficient and functional team is well-known.”



Angel Hulen was named vice president, provider solutions, for managed-vision care player OptumHealth Vision—a division of United Healthcare—in December 2008, moving over from her previous positions as regional VP and national accounts manager in OptumHealth's specialty benefits operation. Previously, Hulen had worked for the former Spectera (now OptumHealth Vision) in the company's vision business since 2001.

In her current role with the company, Hulen's responsibilities now include provider retention and servicing, communicating with the provider network on OptumHealth Vision's programs and operations, and quality assurance. “I work to help our providers in terms of how our benefits are administered, and manage provider files as well,” she said.

She also prides herself on working as a mentor, “passing my knowledge along to help someone else flourish,” Hulen said, adding, “Mentoring is one of the most rewarding components of my leadership role.”

**SHE SAYS...**“I'm happy to see the way the eye-care business includes a large number of women, and how our company embraces women in leadership positions.”

## CANDACE O'KEEFE

**Area Manager**  
Younger Optics  
Peachtree City, Ga.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“She is very enthusiastic about her product, and eager to share her knowledge with labs and opticians. She is always willing to go the extra mile.”



With 26 years of optical industry experience, much of it working as a dispensing optician, O'Keefe is respected by customers and colleagues alike for her extensive knowledge of dispensing and spectacle lenses. Currently Younger Optics's wholesale products manager in the Southern U.S., O'Keefe works with wholesale labs and vertically integrated retail labs.

She is responsible for introducing new products and technologies through marketing and educational training for both laboratory customer service/technicians and ECPs through CE/seminar training and workshops. She maintains customer loyalty through seasonal promotions, customer appreciation events and customized marketing ideas.

An ABO-certified and state certification CE speaker nationally, O'Keefe is also a contributing writer to Focal Point, a publication of the Professional Opticians of Florida organization. She is pleased to see women making progress in all areas of the optical industry.

As she observed, “Today, women are much stronger and more confident in themselves and in their ability to lead. They are building businesses, nurturing families, mentoring young people. I predict this upward trend of women in leadership positions will continue

for a very long time.”

**SHE SAYS...**“As women in our industry continue to become great leaders and role models, their influence sparks others to rise to the occasion, to act on opportunity, to take chances, to not be afraid to rattle the cage once in awhile.”

## CHERYL OBERLEE

**District Sales Manager**  
Essilor Labs  
Dallas, Texas

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Cheryl is an extremely talented, dedicated individual with impeccable integrity. She works 70-hour-weeks training and helping private practices improve their profitability. She is a well-respected professional as well as an innovator, teacher, mentor and creative thinker.”



In her 20-plus years in the optical industry, Cheryl Oberlee has worn many hats while working for Essilor of America. She's been a sales consultant, senior consultant, sales trainer, corporate seminar speaker, district sales manager, strategic accounts manager, director of national accounts, director of sales and marketing, marketing development manager and she is currently in the position of district manager for Essilor Labs.

Oberlee was presented with the New Sales Person of the Year award and then the National Sales Person of the Year award for four consecutive years.



VISION MONDAY 2009  
most influential  
women in optical

MENTORS

“This Most Influential Women Award is especially appreciated as it involves being nominated by my peers as a mentor. I love the people that I have been fortunate enough to work with over the past two decades,” said Oberlee.

She is pleased to see more women in the three Os taking leadership roles. She believes that, while men and women may have different and unique talents and abilities, it is the coming together of diversity that makes us stronger.

**SHE SAYS...**“Remember to take your PDs... because being successful in any optical position takes the following; Patience, Practice, Persistence and Personality as well as Desire, Drive, Determination, Dedication and Diplomacy.”

**MICHELLE SKINNER**

**Vice President of Sales**  
Altair Eyewear  
Rancho Cordova, Calif.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Innovation, growth, passion, and transparency are the values she has built her career upon, while instilling the importance of excellent customer service in her sales team.”



“Smooth seas do not a skilled Captain make,” has been a lesson learned by Altair’s Michelle Skinner from a coterie of what she calls “amazing optical industry female mentors” who have taught her by example how to

be a strong female leader, to embrace change, and that the best learning can come out of the most challenging times.

So after 15 years in the optical industry, and currently being responsible for leading the entire Altair sales team, it is no surprise that Skinner herself has been nominated as a Mentor this year.

“Women have a huge opportunity to leverage our exceptional skills to make a difference in leading our companies and individuals to work as stronger teams with a unified vision,” said Skinner.

All it takes is “embracing new opportunities and challenging yourself. When an opportunity comes along that sounds interesting but takes you a little outside of your comfort zone...go for it. My experience has been that those are the times you learn the most,” she said.

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
Vision Monday’s 2009  
Most Influential Women  
in Optical



RISING STARS AWARD  
**Christine Camsuzou**  
General Manager, Optical Materials  
PPG Industries, Inc.

From all your friends and colleagues at  
PPG Industries and Intercast Group



SHE SAYS...“When working with different personalities the goal is to ‘tap into who they are’ so they can learn to leverage their skills and talents.”

## AURORA SUSI

**Manager/Optician**  
Metro Optics  
Bronx, N.Y.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“A master optician whose approach to the profession combines the science of optics with the social skills to understand patients’ needs.”

After taking a few years off to have children, Aurora Susi joined Metro Optics in 1987 as a part-time receptionist. Seeking a job at



Metro with no prior optical experience, she offered to work for free for a week, to see if she met the owner’s standards. She did...and has been with the two-store

operation for 22 years.

As her children grew, Susi’s hours at Metro Optics increased; she moved into sales, then took over the responsibility for the stores’ frame buying. “I needed to understand optics and lens design to buy frames, so I took opticianry courses,” she recalled.

Eventually she took a seven-hour bus ride to Albany, N.Y., to take her ABO certification exam...and failed it (she did pass and get the certification her next time around).

VISION 2009  
most influential  
women in optical

“I always tell that story to young people I work with, so they know never to give up,” Susi said. That kind of mentoring is a key part of her career: Susi has sponsored four opticians for their state licenses, teaching them the ropes as her apprentices.

In addition to managing Metro’s Westchester Square store, Susi is still a dispensing optician who regularly works with patients, and enjoys it.

“You have to offer people everything, and let it be their choice,” she said. “But patients also want to be told why a particular frame is good for them.”

SHE SAYS...“Eyewear is not just about seeing any more—patients want to feel and look good, and I can help them do that.”

➤ MORE



**Angel Hulen**  
Vice President  
of Provider Solutions

## Congratulations Angel Hulen!

Vision Monday’s Most Influential Women  
*Mentor Category*

“Angel is a terrific leader. She exemplifies the outstanding service and excellent results that epitomize OptumHealth Vision. We are honored to have Angel as a part of our organization.”

- Don Yee,  
President & CEO of OptumHealth Vision

OptumHealth Vision *applauds* Angel on her accomplishments!

**OptumHealth**<sup>SM</sup>  
Vision

## INNOVATORS WOMEN WHO HAVE INITIATED NEW PRODUCT, PROGRAMS, OR IDEAS MARKING SUCCESS

### CRYSTAL R. BESSON

**General Manager**  
Global Optics Inc.  
Green Bay, Wis.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Her many years of experience in eyecare and her understanding of our industry will help guide our profession to the next generation.”



Besson’s father, Tex Williams, ran the stock room at WOS (Wisconsin Optical Supply), and by age 8 she was washing trays there on Saturday mornings, sorting frames and counting temples and screws. At 12, she began helping him with the billings of Global Optics, a lens distribution business affiliated with WOS.

Nearly 40 years later, she now manages Global, the biggest lens warehouse in the U.S. and the second largest network of independent labs. Preparing to take over her father’s duties, Besson is earning a specialized degree in leadership management and ethics. Biltmore Who’s Who named her Executive of the Year 2009.

Outside of optical, Besson mentors young women so they can make better career choices. As she explains, “Most of these young women don’t necessarily have nice jobs, but they do what is necessary to feed themselves and keep a roof over their heads. What I try to do is inspire them to build their confidence, to strive for that dream they once had before they hit the streets.”

**SHE SAYS...**“Vision is seeing the opportunity inside the challenge.”

### PAULA DONNELLY

**Vice President, Product Development**  
Luxottica Retail  
Mason, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“An incredibly well-respected and innovative leader in optical... has a major influence on frame trends and designs”



Paula Donnelly joined Luxottica Retail 24 years ago, after launching her career in optical at a private optometry practice. She has fulfilled a number of roles with Luxottica Retail over that time, most recently spending eight years in product development, the last four as vice president.

Donnelly’s primary responsibility in her current position is “to design and develop product that meets the target customers’ needs” for all of the company’s retail brands in both ophthalmic and sun. She attends most major optical trade shows, visits the parent company’s factory in Italy several times a year, and takes at least one trip to China.

Her greatest challenge? “Keeping our product design on target with trends, considering our lead times, to make sure we’re addressing our customers’ needs at the right time,” Donnelly said. She enjoys creating eyewear styles that will sell thousands of SKUs—“that proves our designs work for everyone,” Donnelly declared.

**SHE SAYS...**“The optical industry has really embraced women, and provided us with lots of opportunities.”

### SHARON FIELDS

**VP of Marketing**  
Halpern Eye Associates  
Dover, Del.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Her attitude and enormous commitment to quality in every aspect

of our practice, especially when we interface with the patient, makes Fields one of the finest executives in the optical industry today.”



In over 15 years with Halpern Eye Associates, Sharon Fields has been successful in developing marketing plans and strategies to help build the company into an eight-location multimillion-dollar practice, the largest in the state.

Her responsibilities include overseeing the marketing department, advertising in all traditional and electronic media, frame inventory, the call center and business development strategies.

Fields has always been a very active citizen in her community. Currently, she is a board member of the Middletown Chamber of Commerce, president of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce marketing department.

She was awarded the 2008 President’s Award from the Middletown Chamber and in 2002 named Volunteer of the Month from the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce.

A graduate of Marymount University of Arlington Va., Fields previously worked for PNC Bank in Delaware and Petrie Corporation, which owns several large retail clothing stores, based out of New York.

Fields said that her lifelong dream has always been to run her own business and in 2002 she became a co-owner of a large health food store, Good News Natural Foods in Dover, which has grown to a full service health foods operation. In her free time, Fields enjoys spending time with her husband, Ray, their two sons, Tim and Christopher, and Yorkshire terrier, Chloe.

**SHE SAYS...**“My boss, Art Halpern, has been very inspirational to me. My philosophy has always been to lead by example, value your employees and mentor your staff.”

## INNOVATORS

### DEBBIE FINK

**Director of Product Development**  
Marchon Eyewear  
Melville, N.Y.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Her extensive product knowledge coupled with her creativity and sense of design has resulted in highly successful sales for the Marchon brands.”



“I fell into the industry by accident,” acknowledged Debbie Fink of Marchon. “I stayed because I thought it was a great place to use my creative sense and packaging engineer background.”

It seems though that it was a fortuitous “accident” for Fink, who joined Marchon in 2007 from DOC, where she had been nominated for **VM’s**

Most Influential Women honors in 2003. “I truly do not consider this a job. I am very fortunate to get paid to do something I love and am passionate about. My job gives me the opportunity to express myself and be creative—creating product that will end up changing someone’s look or image.”

But Fink feels the industry is at a major crossroad. “Large designer brands dominate the market, but with these economic times, people are open-minded to designer looks without the name or price tag. This is opening the doors for more competition among everyone.” That’s a good thing for Fink who has implemented more fashion inspired pieces into the Marchon core brands to create designer looks at moderate prices.

**SHE SAYS...**“Don’t just think outside the box, live outside the box. Take those experiences and use them for your personal and professional development.”

### JODI GROH

**Director of Marketing**  
Nanofilm  
Valley View, Ohio

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Throughout her career, Jodi has promoted category differentiation by developing innovative package and display designs that transform lens care from a functional afterthought into an attractive cosmetic category.”



In the optical market for 14 years with Nanofilm, Jodi Groh has worked her way up through the company from marketing and sales assistant, to accessories coordinator, from marketing manager to the marketing director. As the director of marketing for the

Your significant contributions to the industry are clear.

Congratulations on being named four of the  
50 Most Influential Women in Optical.



**Paula Donnelly**  
Vice President, Product Development

**Kristen McCabe**  
Director and Curator of Product, ILORI

**Julie Washington**  
Vice President - Marketing, Pearle Vision

**Jill Albrinck**  
Chief Operating Officer, LensCrafters

past seven years, Groh has been responsible for the development of products and programs that grow the business both for Nanofilm and for their customers.

Considered a lens care expert in the industry, Groh writes articles and develops training methods for the industry. "I'm a big believer in education with all my customers, from the ECP to the large retailers," said Groh.

In the past, lens care products were typically viewed as a giveaway product with no emphasis placed on the product benefits. Groh has played a key role in changing that mindset through her education programs.

"Our customers have learned that lens care is a profitable category not to be overlooked. It's also a branding tool. As we say at Nanofilm, lens care is not an accessory, it's a necessity," said Groh.

**SHE SAYS...** "Throughout my career at Nanofilm, I've had the opportunity to take on a wide range of responsibilities, create programs and branding messages, develop product lines, and work hand-in-hand with customers. I've learned so much about all aspects of what we do. There's never a dull moment for me and I welcome the challenges."

### PAULA HORNBECK

**Owner**  
Eye Candy,  
Delafield, Wis.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...** "Her leadership within the retail eyecare market influences and projects a positive image for our profession."

VISION  
MONDAY 2009  
most influential  
women in optical



After working for others in several types of optical locations around the country as an optician, Hornbeck took a big leap after her 50th birthday—she enrolled in a business entrepreneurship course and worked on developing an unfulfilled dream, creating her own optical shop. Choosing Delafield, an upscale, small community west of Milwaukee, she opened her Eye Candy boutique in the middle of a snowstorm, had a solid first day and has experienced double-digit growth ever since.

"I wanted to sell lines and products that others weren't selling, and wanted to create a fun environment and customer experience for purchasing eyewear. We focus on exciting displays, fun colors and also put a strong emphasis on sports eyewear. Our store and our Web site com-

## Congratulations Candace Simerson

On being selected as one of  
**Vision Monday's  
2009 Most Influential  
Women**

We greatly appreciate all that you  
have done and continue to do!



WALMAN OPTICAL

## Congratulations Teresa Bryant



for being recognized as one of  
**Vision Monday's 2009 Most Influential Women**  
in the optical industry!



Indiana Ophthalmics, Inc.

Best wishes on your new, additional role  
as Sales Manager for Illinois Ophthalmics!

## INNOVATORS

municate energy and a contemporary approach and we are so gratified by the response.”

Hornbeck also credits colleague and employee Dena Zylka, who has been with her from the start, the support of industry friends like Joe Cherry, her local sales reps and husband Tracy Hornbeck, for inspiring and helping her to succeed.

**SHE SAYS...**“You have to believe in yourself. Find your passion, work hard and you can make it happen.”

### MARY O'HARA

**Marketing Specialist,  
Professional Communications**  
Transitions Optical, Inc.  
Pinellas Park, Fla.

**CHOSEN BECAUSE...**“Mary O'Hara has been integral to shaping and furthering Transition's healthy sight message and communicating the multitude of programs the company offers to support industry professionals.”



As a marketing specialist for Transitions Optical, Mary O'Hara could easily be described as a 'great communicator.' Her main responsibilities consist of keeping the trade press updated on the latest news, programs and tools available from Transitions.

However, another message close to her heart is that of Transitions Healthy Sight for Life Fund. As the Regional Giving Liaison for the U.S. and Canada, O'Hara oversees the selection and management of charities sup-

ported by the fund that champion healthy sight and educate about the need for eye health awareness.

“I see myself first and foremost as a communicator. I'm always looking for new ways to reach out to consumers so they start thinking more about their vision and take the initiative to get an eye exam and talk to their eyecare professional about protective lens options that fit their lifestyles.” Her favorite thing about working for Transitions? “The corporate culture of Transitions allows us to try new ideas and let's us be our best.”

**SHE SAYS...**“We're all influential women in optical. I feel fortunate to work with incredible people who are so committed to the overall good of our industry. We help and inspire each other every day.”



# Jobson Optical Congratulates

the 2009 Most Influential Women in Optical  
and all the women who keep the optical  
industry moving forward!

**Jobson**  
Optical Group



## INNOVATORS

### AUDREY J. PAVIA

#### Vice President of Marketing

Tura L.P.

Great Neck, N.Y.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“She is the driving force behind all of Tura’s creative endeavors and is a major reason for Tura’s continued success.”



“What’s not to love about my job?” said Audrey Pavia, but when pressed, she can pinpoint the one thing she likes best about her job. “The people I work with represent more than colleagues—they provide daily inspiration. I am fortunate enough to have a nurturing boss, John Weir, who has recognized my strengths, and has helped to develop me into a well-rounded professional. Being surrounded by these people makes each working day simply enjoyable.”

As a 23-year veteran of the industry it wouldn’t be surprising if this enjoyment stems from the knowledge that she has accomplished all the professional goals she set out for herself. But that is not the case; in fact Pavia may have set a goal for herself that she will never actually be able to complete. “It’s the one thing that keeps me going—that there are always constant challenges to improve marketing efforts and develop new creative programs. I look forward to meeting these challenges as they continue to arise.”

**SHE SAYS...**“At the end of the day, it’s about reaching for the stars and not giving up until the goal is achieved—and having fun while getting there.”

### EDEN WEXLER

#### Director of Public Relations

Sáfilo USA/Solstice Marketing Concepts  
Parsippany, N.J.

CHOSEN BECAUSE...“Her PR initiatives have benefited the industry by increasing awareness of eyewear as an accessory, promoting the importance of sunglasses for preserving eye health and creating new venues for reporting on eyewear news. She brings a tremendous commitment and strong work ethic to her job.”



From film festivals, TV appearances, interactions with movie studios and fashion editors, Wexler is constantly on the move in her role directing public relations activities for 35 Sáfilo Group brands in the U.S. and for the company’s 150+ Solstice and Sunlights sunglass boutiques. Wexler and her team oversee media activities at special events like the Grammy’s, Golden Globes and Fashion Week and extensive TV and film product placement on behalf

of both companies. She liaises regularly with licensors’ PR departments and those at Sáfilo Group and is herself a highly visible spokesperson for the brands and eyewear fashion trends.

Wexler’s career included a broad range of accomplishments in the fashion and beauty fields before arriving at Sáfilo in 1999, where she structured the company’s first in-house PR department and embarked on her energetic path to forge a place for eyewear and sunwear in the media world. Wexler “thinks about eyewear 24/7—in today’s media, it’s constant. We work with our sales force. The executive team and Robin Ettinger are so supportive of our efforts.”

**SHE SAYS...**“PR is sales, strategy, writing, creativity and so many things combined. I pinch myself daily when I think of the things I’ve been able to do. It’s exciting when PR sets us apart, and helps sell the eyewear in and sell it through.”

## Methodology

Nomination forms requesting submissions for Vision Monday’s 7th Annual “Most Influential Women in Optical” report were issued via Jobson’s Vision Monday and 20/20 publications and Web sites during the months of May and June 2009.

This year’s request for nominations was structured like the 2008 Report in that we continued to expand the scope of women recognized in the report, who make leadership contributions throughout the ECP, retail, supplier, lab, managed care and association landscape.

Readers were asked to make up to three nominations per the following categories: **Executive Suite**, **Mentors**, **Rising Stars** and **Innovators**. The nomination form defined these as: **Executive Suite**—Candidates are women who hold the positions of president, CEO, CFO, CMO, CIO or COO that guide their companies forward, inspire leadership among their teams and peers and achieve high performance. **Mentors**—Candidates are women who are team builders, developers of talent, who via example or education successfully influence others to grow in their business or professional acumen. **Rising Stars**—Candidates are women who are “up-and-comers” in their careers and within their companies or arenas; sharp talents who are on their way toward higher levels of responsibility and influence. **Innovators**—Candidates are women who have initiated new product developments or special programs in the arena of marketing, technology or retail, who have spearheaded innovative business ideas or enterprises.

The “Influential Women” process is not designed to be a vote or a ranking. More than 200 nominations were reviewed and categorized by **VM’s** editors. The “Chosen Because...” selections are drawn from the submitted nominations. Honorees are listed alphabetically by category. ■■



# The Next Generation of Female Leaders

Opportunities Abound for Graduates



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**N**EW YORK—As the opportunities for eyecare and eyewear increase in the U.S., the roles of women graduating from the nation's professional schools of opticianry and optometry will also expand.

The students chosen to represent their schools in **Vision Monday's** "Class of 2009" Special Report have indeed set the bar very high—for professionalism, community involvement and the number of honors received. Their success in school is a precursor of what lies ahead for many of them as they embark on their professional careers in the optical industry.

Many of these women are entering a field where potential co-workers all share the same passion for eyecare, health and wellness. They are and will continue to be motivated to discover new treatments and technologies while still maintaining the highest level of expertise in their respective fields.

This marks the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of this special section, underwritten by a grant from the Luxotica Group.

*Class of 2009 Student Profiles compiled and written by Amelia Rossi*

## OPTICIANRY STUDENTS



**ALLYSON CAMPMAN**

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Richmond, Va.

Campman served five years active duty and now is a SSgt (E-5) in the Air Force Reserves.

She graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors from J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College while pursuing a chemistry degree at Northern Virginia Community College and working a full-time opticianry job. At Reynolds, Campman managed to remain at the top of her class while completing her work via distance learning because she did not live near campus.

Campman's husband is also on active duty in the Air Force. The couple has relocated to Fort Meade, Md. Campman said she would love to further her education and become an optometrist.

HER SCHOOL SAYS... "She has faced many challenges."



**LISA DEJULIO**

Indiana University of Optometry  
Optician/Technician Program  
Bloomington, Ind.

When the time came after her sophomore year to declare a major, DeJulio researched her options and found opticianry suited her best.

IU's opticianry program director said DeJulio worked comfortably in three different settings: the optical dispensary, a clinical setting and in the optical laboratory. DeJulio's "absolute favorite" would be in a clinical setting working with patients. "I love helping people and the one-on-one interaction," DeJulio said.

In May 2009, she completed the optician/technician program and will graduate in August with her Bachelors Degree. She hopes to stay close to home and pursue jobs locally.

HER SCHOOL SAYS... "Lisa shows great promise for a fulfilling and influential career."

The Next Generation of Leadership is presented by



## OPTICIANRY STUDENTS



### AMY EASTERLIN

Middlesex Community College  
Middleton, Conn

Easterlin, once a school teacher, decided she needed a change in careers. Recalling the pleasant experience she had while working for her optometrist during high school, she became curious and inquired about about the field. Eventually she decided opticianry was her next career.

Easterlin is ABO/NCLE certified. She served as clinic manager at the college's optical clinic and completed a fellowship in contact lenses. The fellowship made her realize how CLs could impact someone's life and said "you learn not to take vision for granted when you hear stories about how a patient can see the trees or the stars clearly for the first time."

Although she does not want to forget her teaching background, right now she wants to get into contact lens fitting and possibly begin classes toward earning a PhD.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**"Amy was a finalist in the 2009 NFOS/Essilor College Bowl at Vision Expo East."



### HALI GIBSON

Roane State Community College  
Harriman, Tenn.

Gibson was the first generation college graduate in her family and said "attending college was a very important milestone in my life."

She made the Dean's List, was chosen for Who's Who Among College Students and was selected to attend the NFOS College Bowl in NYC. She served as treasurer for the Student Optical Society and was honored as Opticianry Student of the Year, an award chosen by her fellow classmates and instructors.

She volunteered with Remote Area Medical, an organization that provides free health care in remotes areas of the U.S., and said she loved helping the people. "For someone to break down and cry because they can finally see for the first time in their life is worth it all."

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**"She is the Opticianry Student of the Year."



### CAROLE LOVERSO

Erie Community College  
Williamsburg, N.Y.

While working 40-plus hours a week, commuting to school and going through grueling ACL surgery and therapy, LoVerso was still able to graduate with a 4.0 GPA.

She expressed gratitude toward her teachers and classmates for the "genuine support" that helped her stay motivated and on track.

While working as an optical manager, she was able to apply her "real life experiences with fellow students and give them insight into the optical field." She also participated in research projects about HIV in the optical field and glaucoma risks among Hispanics and African Americans.

LoVerso wants to obtain her masters degree in the health field, an ABOC masters degree and NCLE masters degrees. She will continue to work as an optical manager.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**"Carole's academic performance and professional participation is outstanding."



### NOUR SALAMEH

Cuyahoga Community College  
Cleveland, Ohio

Salameh managed to complete her degree

while working full-time at her family's restaurant, tutoring peers and sitting on the Cuyahoga Community College Optical Technology Advisory Committee as a student member. Given her hectic schedule, the only time to study was during work breaks, in the early morning or late at night.

She plans to continue her education to obtain either a degree as a physician's assistant or to become an optometrist. This will help her obtain her ultimate goal to "help people feel and look better," she said.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**"Nour has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in everything that she does."



### GERI STACY

Raritan Valley Community College  
North Branch, N.J

Stacy is described as having an "ever-present 'can do' attitude that is most impressive and infectious." She attributes this to the love for her chosen field in opticianry. "I find it exciting every time I can apply the ideas and formulas I have learned at school."

What she enjoys most about her job, Stacy said, is helping patients see. "Everyone deserves to see the world around them and I find it rewarding that I can help them do this by using my expertise to create and fit glasses."

Stacy plans to take her state dispenser exam and the NCLE exam. She also wants to increase her work with contact lenses. Ultimately, she wants to either manage or own her own office.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**"Geri will succeed in all of her future endeavors."



## OPTOMETRY STUDENTS



**ANDREA BUITRAGO  
ANTONELLI, OD**

UC Berkeley School of Optometry  
Berkeley, Calif.

Antonelli received the “Gold Retinoscope,” chosen by the faculty and fellow students, recognizing her mastery of skills and the most contributions over four years to the class.

She gained interest in optometry while working for a small practice in Athens, Ga. but after 9/11, moved to New York City where she worked for Deutsche Bank and was involved with The Children’s Aid Society, DonorsChoose.org, and the Colombian American Community Foundation.

Since graduation, Antonelli has relocated to New York with hopes of working in a private practice. She plans to complete a pediatric residency next year. Eventually, she wants to own her own practice.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**“Antonelli is kind, genuine, and selfless.”



**KIMBERLY MAY  
DILLIVAN, OD**

Michigan College of Optometry  
Big Rapids, Mich.

Dillivan’s accomplishments include being tied for the highest GPA in her class and winning a Beta Sigma Kappa Silver Medal Award.

She served as a student ambassador for her school, as well as the secretary of both the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) and Michigan OSA. Through her involvements in these organizations she was able to join efforts with prospective students, faculty and politicians. Dillivan also collaborated with Dr. William Denton and presented two posters at the Southern Education Congress in Optometry.

In July, she will begin a residency to “gain more experience in ocular disease and patient manage-

ment” at William Bryan Jennings Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Columbia, S.C.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**“She is an outstanding young graduate.”



**KATIE GREINER, OD**

Ohio State University College  
of Optometry  
Columbus, Ohio

Greiner served as president of her class in each of the four years of her study and as president of the Optometry Student Council from 2007 to 2008. Greiner also was on the Gold Key International Senior Honor Society. Her leadership roles in both organizations gave her opportunities to work with students and faculty.

She also was a four-year member in Epsilon Psi Epsilon, Beta Sigma Kappa, AOSA and the Ohio Optometric Association. She maintained three-year memberships in Sports Vision Club, Graduate Organization for Vision Science and the American Academy of Optometry Student Section.

Greiner is graduating in August with her Doctor of Optometry and Masters in Vision Science with plans to complete a residency in Madison, Wis.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**“She provided exemplary leadership.”



**JULIE K. HUTCHINSON,  
OD**

Pennsylvania College of  
Optometry at Salus University  
Elkins Park, Pa.

At a young age, Hutchinson’s grandmother suffered vision loss due to glaucoma and she points to this experience as her inspiration for pursuing a career in optometry.

This year, she was a recipient of the Alumni Association Award for the highest academic

average during four years of professional study. She also was a recipient of the Cooper Vision Excellence in Contact Lens Award and the Beta Sigma Kappa award.

In addition to these honors, Hutchinson also served the student government, SVOSH, tutored classmates and was a teacher’s assistant.

She will complete a residency at the St. Louis Veterans Affairs Medical Center. After residency, she is interested in splitting her time between working in a hospital and private practice.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**“We are very pleased.”



**ERIN CHRISTINE  
JENEWEIN, OD**

Nova Southeastern University  
College of Optometry  
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Jenewein earned a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Wisconsin as well as Bachelor of Vision Science and a Doctor of Optometry at Nova Southeastern University (NSU).

Currently, she is completing a residency in pediatrics and binocular vision at NSU. She has already completed an internship at NSU during 2007-2008 and an externship at Bascum Palmer Eye Institute.

In 2009, Jenewein was awarded a Beta Sigma Kappa Silver Medal, Dean’s Award, Luxottica Award for Excellence in Pediatrics and Vision Therapy, 2009 Milroy Optical Scholar Award, Dr. Lester Janoff Memorial Award for Excellence and was the student government association president. In 2008, she was awarded a Beta Sigma Kappa student research grant to investigate the impact of the visual field on an accommodative function.

After she completes her residency in pediatrics and binocular vision at NSU she wants to join a vision therapy practice or teach at an optometry school.

**HER SCHOOL SAYS...**“Erin’s record is simply outstanding.”

## OPTOMETRY STUDENTS



**TERESA ANJALI E. MATHEW, OD**

University of Missouri St. Louis  
School of Optometry  
St. Louis, Mo.

With her newly obtained degree, Mathew wants to promote “healthy lifestyles which will ensure long lasting vision.”

During her time at UMSL, she was a four-year member of Beta Sigma Kappa, served as the vice president of the Student Association for Independent Optometry, and was an American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) member. She also completed a two-week mission with Student Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity (SVOSH).

Mathew will practice in Phoenix, Ariz. and hopes to make healthy lifestyles achievable through adequate patient education.

HER SCHOOL SAYS...“She was a 2009 American Academy of Optometry Carl Zeiss Vision Scholarship award winner.”



**BILLI JAYNE PRINZEN, OD**

Illinois College of Optometry  
Chicago Ill.

Prinzen has received a number of honors during her time at ICO. Among these are a AOF-Carl Zeiss Vision Fellowship in 2008, an AOA Student Leadership Award in 2008 and a Cribb Leadership and Service Award. She was named the ICO Class of 2009—Colleague of the Year, received an ICO Faculty Scholarship and a Wildermuth Foundation Scholarship. She also completed a SVOSH mission to El Salvador.

Prinzen recently held positions as president and president-elect of the student association, ICO yearbook editor and was a student representative for ICO’s board of trustees.

She will begin a residency program in Cornea & Contact Lenses at Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry and has hopes of teaching someday.

HER SCHOOL SAYS...“She is accomplished academically, clinically and is quite polished.”



**MELANIE SHEARER, OD**

SUNY College of Optometry  
New York, N.Y.

Shearer graduated first in her class and was awarded the Beta Sigma Award, the college’s highest award for excellence. She attributes her high standing in her graduating class to “dedication and hard work.”

She was one of nine students in her class to be a member of the Optometric Honor Society for all four years of her study. During 2007-2008, Dillivan served as secretary for the Leo Club, the student version of the Lion’s Club. Also in 2007, she volunteered to give vision screenings at the Special Olympics sponsored by the Lion’s Club in New York City.

She plans to graduate and marry in August and then return to Rochester, N.Y. to work.

HER SCHOOL SAYS...“Academically, first in her class.”



**KAYLA SNIPES VICKERS, OD**

University of Alabama Birmingham  
Birmingham, Ala.

Vickers completed a doctor of optometry and masters in vision science during her four years at UAB School of Optometry. She attributes much of her success to her “committed and dedicated” advisor, Dr. Janene Sims.

She was a member of the AOSA, SVOSH and served as the community services chair and class

representative for NOSA. Also, she volunteered at Cahaba Valley Health and gave vision screenings.

This year, Vickers was awarded one of two professional scholarships given by the U.S. Army.

She is completing an Army Residency at Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry and looks forward to the opportunities the Army future holds for her.

HER SCHOOL SAYS...“Academically, the ability to complete a dual degree within a four-year time frame is considered a major accomplishment.”



**JENNIFER HERMETZ YORK, OD**

Southern College of Optometry  
Memphis, Tenn

York graduated Suma Cum Laude and was her class’s valedictorian.

Her involvements and awards include being a member of Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. She received the \$1,000 National Board of Examiners in Optometry Part II Highest Score Award and the Outstanding Clinician Award which is given to seniors by the clinical faculty on the basis of exemplary performance during senior year.

The organizations that she valued and enjoyed the most were Fellowship of Christian Optometrist and Student ambassadors, “...two organizations I truly loved being a part of at SCO,” York said.

York, originally from Meridian, Miss., is planning to practice in her home state in Jackson.

HER SCHOOL SAYS...“A shining example of academic and clinical excellence.”

