

# OUTSIDER THE BOX

The logo for the VM DARE Awards is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page. It features the letters 'VM' in a small, blue, sans-serif font above the word 'DARE' in a large, stylized, blue, outlined font. Below 'DARE' is the word 'AWARDS' in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. To the right of 'AWARDS' is the text '2nd ANNUAL DISPENSING AND RETAIL EXCELLENCE AWARDS' in a small, blue, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines.

## VM Salutes 2012's Most Daring Optical Retailers

NEW YORK—*Vision Monday* is proud to announce the winners of our 2nd Annual Dispensing and Retail Excellence (D.A.R.E.) Awards.

The D.A.R.E. Awards were originally conceived to honor daring optical retailers and dispensers from across North America in five different categories, with an additional winner, chosen by reader votes, for a sixth award.

Retailers and ECPs were asked to submit entries from June 6 through July 6. Those submissions were reviewed by a panel of judges (see details on page 61) and the winner in each category was identified. The judges also selected five entries they deemed worthy of special recognition for their daring approaches across different aspects of optical retailing to be put up for the 'We the People' Reader's Vote Award.

From July 16 through Aug. 6, readers were then able to vote on those five nominees at [www.VisionMonday.com/DARE](http://www.VisionMonday.com/DARE) to determine a winner. The entry with the second highest number of reader votes was named Honorable Mention.

Over the next several pages you will be able to see a small sampling of the submission entries

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# JUDGES

D.A.R.E JUDGES

## KAREN GIBERSON, THE ACCESSORIES COUNCIL



Giberson has over 20 years of experience in marketing, merchandising and public/media relations. She is the president of The Accessories Council where she sets the vision of the organization and is responsible for over 16 events annually, including the ACE Awards.

She is also a partner in Fred Siegel Partners, has executive produced the television show/product line "Avec Eric," airing on PBS since 2009 and is a partner in Hunter & Moss, a line of environmentally friendly handbags. [www.accessoriescouncil.org](http://www.accessoriescouncil.org)

## CLODAGH NORTON, EYESTYLIST



Norton is a British journalist who has worked in the optical sector for over 13 years. She is editorial director of 20/20 Europe and co-founder of the Eyestylist, The Fine Eyewear Design Review, a new site dedicated to high-quality sunglass and spectacle designs. Since 2008, she has also worked as a communications consultant specializing in consumer PR for eyewear companies. [www.eyestylist.com](http://www.eyestylist.com)

## DEIRDRE CARROLL, VISION MONDAY



Carroll is senior editor of *Vision Monday* magazine, where she's covered frames, sunwear and fashion accessories as well as retail buying and merchandising trends for the past six years. She is the creator and editor of *Style.Pages* in print and **Bold Face** and **High Visibility** on *VisionMonday.com*. Carroll also serves as *VM's* social media coordinator and chief community officer for SightNation, the top social network community site for eyecare industry professionals.

## CATHERINE WOLINSKI, VISION MONDAY



Wolinski is *Vision Monday's* assistant editor. The newest member of the team, she has also taken responsibility for the daily maintenance of *VM's* Twitter and Facebook pages, as well as assisting with the web production of *VMail* e-newsletters and content management for SightNation. Her focus for the publication is to cover independent retailers and professional associations, along with being editor of the Local Diary, In/Store and Communique features of *VM* in print.

## MARGE AXELRAD, JOBSON OPTICAL GROUP



A 24-year veteran in the optical industry, Axelrad is currently responsible for the overall editorial direction of *Vision Monday* including its print publication, *VMail*, its e-newsletters including CLICK, *VisionMonday.com* and special events including the VM Global Leadership Summit. ■

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# THE RESISTANCE IS FUTILE AWARD

FOR MOST DARING ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN (PRINT, TV OR RADIO ADVERTISING)

VM  
DARE  
AWARDS  
2012 ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## L.A. EYEWORKS

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

WWW.LAEYEWORKS.COM

OWNERS: GAI GHERARDI

BARBARA MCREYNOLDS



### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“Since its founding in 1979, the store windows of L.a.Eyeworks have been an indelible aspect of the company’s expressive vocabulary and an essential part of its dialogue with the public.

The window concepts are a dynamic facet of the L.a.Eyeworks ecology, alternately emerging from and feeding into other aspects of brand and design development. A display idea might be the groundwork for a cleaning cloth motif, and the discussion of a frame name might inspire a window slogan. Since many of the concepts are word-based, they are easily portable and have been reproduced by L.a.Eyeworks accounts worldwide. Window development is an obsessive concern at the company, involving staff-wide discussions, and very often, the input of customers.

L.a.Eyeworks co-founder/co-designer Gai Gherardi adds, ‘With the windows, we poke fun at things, we question perceptions, we make absurd gestures. . . We encourage people to think.’ From outrageous props and elaborate installations to bold declarations in graphic vinyl lettering, the windows express L.a.Eyeworks’ love of objects, word play, spiritual encouragements, and the delight of discovery. While store display has often focused on product or lifestyle imagery, L.a.Eyeworks’ windows have rarely featured the award-winning eyeglasses designs of Barbara McReynolds and Gherardi. ‘We often meet people who have never set foot in our stores, but know L.a.Eyeworks through our windows,’ said Angela Gee, director of marketing. ‘Optical fashion evolves and changes, but we see the window displays as an opportunity to take our brand into a deeper place of social memory.’

Whether pointing to social questions, political absurdities, gender issues, cultural obsessions, or to gargantuan pumpkins at the holidays, the self-named ‘window wonders’ of L.a.Eyeworks aim to amplify the collective understanding of ‘vision’ and ‘seeing’ as expansive concepts, full of optimistic possibility.”

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# THE SEEING GREEN AWARD

FOR MOST DARING ECO-CHIEVEMENT

VM  
DARE  
AWARDS  
27th ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## ACCURATE OPTICAL COMPANY

SALISBURY, MD.

WWW.ACCURATEOPTICAL.COM

OWNERS: STEVEN M. ZEIDMAN, OD

CHARLES L. MCDONALD, OD

JOHN F. LYNCH, JR., OD



### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“As part of the company’s green initiative and commitment to preserving resources, Accurate Optical made a commitment to reduce its consumption of a few specific consumables: Paper, plastic, electricity and water.

- **Paper:** Following an EMR upgrade, Accurate Optical brought in multifunction scanner, copier, fax and printer units in all eight locations. The goal was to significantly reduce paper consumption during patient visits by scanning forms directly into the patient record at the point of service, eliminating the need to make copies of forms, ID cards and supporting documentation. In the year following the install, consumption has dropped by almost 60 percent.
- **Plastic:** As a customer service benefit, Accurate Optical provided free eyeglass cleaner kits to patients following the purchase of eyewear. Last calendar year, the company distributed 37,000 1 oz. plastic cleaner bottles. With a slight change in policy, the company now refills bottles at no cost to patients. This change will reduce the number of bottles dispensed to around 9,000 annually.
- **Electricity:** Accurate Optical has replaced every florescent fixture with high efficiency ballasts and motion-sensitive LED lighting in all retail locations and the company’s corporate office. Additionally, timed motion sensors have replaced light switches in offices and any nonessential space. The new lighting system helps reduce energy consumption while also providing significant cost savings of around 36 percent monthly.
- **Water:** Accurate Optical was the first independent optical retailer to invest in the digital freeform lens manufacturing equipment. The Coburn Technologies ALPS system reduced plastic lens inventory by 3,500 pairs, and saved significant water consumption in generation and fining/polishing. The company’s main lab now uses tablespoons of water for surfacing instead of cups or gallons used for traditional surfacing.

While each of these initiatives are small by themselves, their implementation has greatly reduced the organization’s carbon footprint.”



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# THE SHOP IT LIKE IT'S HOT AWARD

FOR MOST DARING STORE DESIGN, RETAIL ENVIRONMENT, MERCHANDISING AND/OR WINDOW DISPLAY

VM  
DARE  
AWARDS  
2011 ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## EUROPTICS

DENVER, COLO.

WWW.EUROPTICS.NET

CO-OWNER AND PRESIDENT: IRA HABER



### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“A couple of years ago, we changed the advertising tag line for Europtics to ‘The Art Of Optics’. With the new Europtics Cherry Creek North location in Denver, we were truly able to put this tag line into visible practice by covering a number of the windows in the new location with classic artwork wearing eyewear that Europtics sells. A number of the windows needed to be painted over or obscured, as they were doctors’ exam rooms or windows to spaces such as offices that didn’t need light or peering eyes. Some of the great artwork pictured on the windows include paintings from DaVinci, Van Gogh, Renoir, Vermeer, Gauguin and Modigliani. Eyeglasses featured on these paintings include Anne et Valentin, Etnia and more. The six windows covered in vinyl measure between eight to 10 feet in height and are as wide as seven feet across.

Europtics’ new flagship Cherry Creek North store is an exciting new look for the optical retailer and for the industry. This store throws out the conventional and reinvents the retail optical store with a cutting edge look that brings every brand name to a level playing field, with over 1,000 frames displayed from corner to corner. The decor is modern, with lots of glass to showcase product instead of fixtures. Inside are four 42-inch monitors playing long customized videos targeting different portions of the business, from eyewear frame design to fashion sunglasses. In the ceiling are five huge clear Lucite triangles filled with old eyewear frames. The new store has brought new life and new excitement to this high-end retail legend. Sales are up, and more shoppers are finding the name brand designer eyeglasses and sunglasses Europtics has built a 25-year reputation providing.”



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# THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AWARD

FOR MOST DARING COMMUNITY OUTREACH, PHILANTHROPIC OR PATIENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

VM  
DARE  
AWARDS  
20th ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## HENRY FORD OPTIMEYES

MADISON HEIGHTS, MICH.

WWW.HENRYFORDOPTIMEYES.COM

CEO, HENRY FORD HEALTH SYSTEM: NANCY M. SCHLICHTING

### Help Send Kids in Need to Camp

Every July, team members at all Henry Ford OptimEyes (HFO) locations raise money to help send kids to two special camps: Camp Erin and Camp Maplegrove.

**Camp Erin** is for children, from first-graders to recent high school graduates, who have experienced the death of a loved one. This can be a parent, sibling, or grandparent, or even a nanny or close family friend. "Camp Erin offers kids a place where they can come together and see that they are not alone in their grief," says Michele Krefl, Camp Erin Program Supervisor.

**Camp Maplegrove** is for children ages 5 to 17 who live with substance abuse, mental illness, or other chronic stress in their family. "The purpose of the camp is to help the kids learn to handle their problems in a healthy and safe way," explains Betty Conger, founder of the camp and Coordinator of the Maplegrove Children and Family Program.

Both camps are free for the children, so they rely on donations and volunteers to provide services. Camp Erin costs approximately \$500 per camper and Camp Maplegrove is approximately \$125 per camper. Our goal is to send 30 children to camp. Please help us reach that goal!

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Your local HFO location will hold fund-raising events, sell t-shirts, sell gift baskets, raffish, and other donation opportunities.

**DONATIONS FOR CAMP ERIN AND CAMP MAPLEGROVE CAN BE MADE AT ANY HFO LOCATION. Call 1.800.EYE.CARE (1.800.393.2273) for a location near you.**

**TO VOLUNTEER OR LEARN MORE ABOUT CAMP ERIN AND CAMP MAPLEGROVE, call (248) 661-6170 or e-mail mce\_cp@hfhs.org. TO VOLUNTEER OR LEARN MORE ABOUT CAMP MAPLEGROVE, call (313) 874-6881.**

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**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Your local HFO location will hold fund-raising events through July. Stop by or call to learn about our t-shirt sales, gift basket raffish, and other donation opportunities.

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### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

"Every July, team members at all Henry Ford OptimEyes locations raise money to help send kids to two special healing camps: Camp Erin and Camp Maplegrove.

'Camp Erin is a place for children who have experienced the death of a close family member or friend,' explained Geri Hulvey, an optometric technician at Henry Ford OptimEyes who volunteers with the camp. 'It helps kids deal with their grief, find closure and gain hope. It helps them know they are not alone.'

The camp is an extension of SandCastles, a biweekly program open to the community at large and sponsored by Henry Ford Hospice for grieving children and their families. But Camp Erin offers kids the chance to get away and tend to their own needs. 'The healing impact of camp is powerful. You can see the growth as it happens when the campers face their grief, support each other, and learn lifelong coping skills,' said Peggy Nielsen, director of Camp Erin.

Camp Maplegrove, a Henry Ford Health System program, is for children who live with substance abuse, mental illness, or other chronic stress in their family. 'We help give these kids the tools they need to express their true feelings appropriately,' described Betty Conger, co-founder of Camp Maplegrove. 'These children can't change their situation, but they can learn ways to cope with it.' In fact, many who come to Camp Maplegrove as a child come back to volunteer later in life. 'These volunteers are proof that stressful situations can be overcome,' added Conger. 'Camp Maplegrove fosters resiliency and teaches children the skills to move forward in positive ways.'

Both camps serve children ages 5 to 18 and tuition is free, so they rely on donations and volunteers to provide services. Since 2009, Henry Ford OptimEyes employees have raised nearly \$50,000 to send more than 150 children to camp."

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# THE LEAD, FOLLOW OR GET OUT OF THE WEB AWARD

FOR MOST DARING SOCIAL MEDIA OR WEB PRESENCE (INCLUDING WEBSITES, SOCIAL NETWORKING AND VIRAL MARKETING)

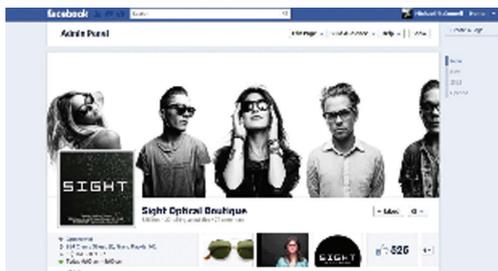
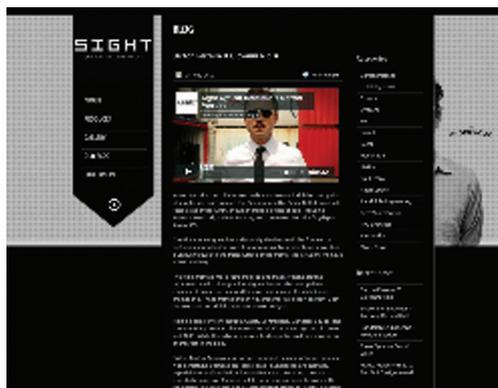
VM  
DARE  
AWARDS  
27th ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## SIGHT OPTICAL

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

WWW.SIGHTOPTICALBOUTIQUE.COM

OWNER: MICHAEL MCCONNELL



### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“We at Sight Optical Boutique take our website and social networking very seriously. As a new business, it is paramount that we embrace all that is possible and right at our finger tips, especially when financial investment is so low.

**The Website:** We wanted to create something that was powerful visually, as well as clean, modern and easy to navigate. The main page of the site can be switched to promote products or events, and can be rotated as well. This has given us great flexibility in terms of marketing.

**Web Shop:** We’ve also recently added a web shop in order to bring great products to our customers, wherever they may be. We feel that this is a growing segment of the marketplace and one that simply cannot be ignored.

**Social Networking:** On our site, there is a blog that keeps our customers connected, informed, and interested in our shop. We also maintain a very active Facebook page that has grown to over 500 ‘fans’ in one year. On our Facebook page, we inform our fan base about new product launches, frame designs, celebrity sightings and videos, all while providing an overall branding consistent with the image of our shop. We try to keep it interesting and update it frequently without becoming annoying. We also participate on Instagram and Pinterest.

Overall, I think we have really done a great job in this category. There is a science to social media, and we have mastered it to some degree.”

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# THE “WE THE PEOPLE” READER VOTE AWARD

FOR MOST DARING RETAILER – **WINNER**

VM  
**DART**  
AWARDS  
27th ANNUAL  
DISPENSING AND RETAIL  
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## INNOVATIVE EYE CARE

CHARLOTTE, N.C.

WWW.INNOVATIVEEYECARE.NET

OWNER: MICHELLE MUMFORD, OD

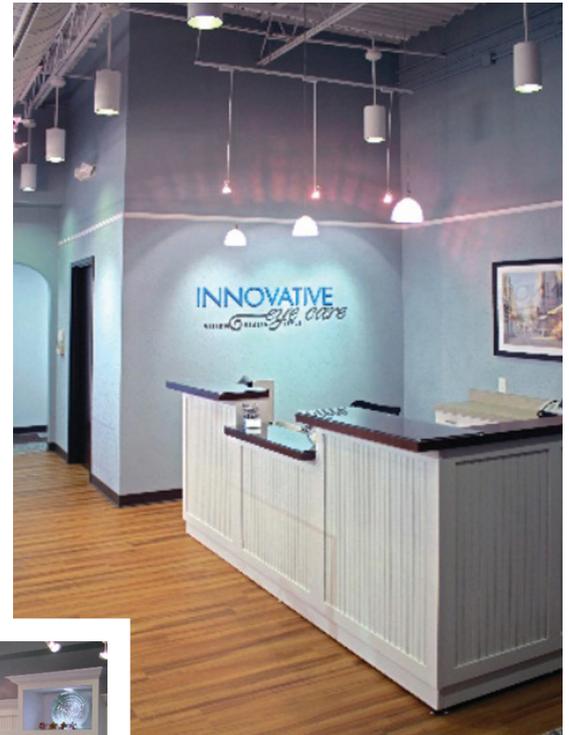
### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“Ask any optometrist to name the highest-risk optical business activity of 2011. Opening a first practice cold would likely be at the top of the list but Michelle Mumford, OD decided to take that daring action in the upscale Dillworth neighborhood of Charlotte, N.C. Armed with the assistance of Williams Group consultants and the financial planning prowess of her marketing executive husband, Jeff Mumford, the couple set out to create Innovative Eye Care, a practice that offers the highest standards for Vision...Health...Style.

The Mumfords knew that creating a first-class look and feel for the office would be a challenge on the limited budget they had to work within, but they also realized that engaging top professionals for design (Barbara Wright Design, Nashville, Tenn.) and construction (Colony Builders, Charlotte, N.C.) was a must to achieve the high quality office environment they required. They asked for a design that would attract high income patients, create trust and confidence in both their fashion eyewear and clinical services and embody the name Innovative Eye Care in a unique and powerful way.

With eyewear ranging from mid-priced to high-end name brands, the boutique look of the optical tells shoppers, ‘Expect high fashion and high quality here.’ White-on-white custom display cases and walls create a spacious feeling and make the frames pop. Mixing in classic Queen Anne chairs with bargain-priced accent tables and a quirky crystal chandelier give the shop a dashing style.

Within a month after opening, they were seeing nearly twice as many patients and selling more eyewear than expected due to patrons being drawn in by the sparkling style of the office. After first making the initial daring decision to start a new practice in an uncertain economy, and then holding fast to their vision of a daring and unique office design, they now reap the rewards of launching a successful startup.”



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# THE “WE THE PEOPLE” READER VOTE AWARD

75

FOR MOST DARING RETAILER – HONORABLE MENTION

## MODERN EYES

AUSTIN, TEXAS

WWW.MODERNEYESAUSTIN.COM

OWNER: SONJA FRANKLIN, OD

### SUBMISSION ESSAY...

“A boutique optical and full service optometrist’s office located four blocks from the University of Texas, Modern Eyes is known both for its adherence to green building practices and its clean, contemporary design.

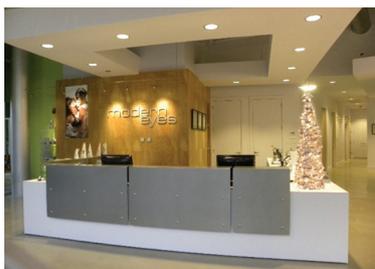
With the vision of Mark Franklin, Sonja Franklin, OD’s husband, a professional building designer, the concept behind the office’s aesthetic utilizes an intentionally simple palette of materials to define the look:

- With the exception of the carpeted exam rooms, exposed concrete flooring runs throughout the office,
- Raised steel panels bolted to white cabinetry form both the desk and the front window displays,
- A frameless, cube-shaped etched glass enclosure provides for a private and light-filled pretest area,
- A 44-foot long concrete wall runs the length of the office to define the dispensary and house the frame collections,
- Lime green, used in the office signage, enlivens the space in strategic locations, and
- Birch plywood paneling behind the front desk and in the luxury frame area adds a warm, natural touch.

To accentuate the office’s design and materials, lighting—including LED fixtures—provides options while adhering to the building owner’s strict energy budget.

With a simple yet diverse composition of materials along with careful attention to detail and an inviting, sophisticated level of design, Modern Eyes has a uniquely modern aesthetic that lives up to its name.”

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## Most Daring Optical Retailers

Continued from page 59

and supporting materials that earned each of these retailers this year's honor.

Some interesting facts about this year's winners is that nearly all of them are independent optical boutiques; no big box retailers here. Additionally, the length of time our winners have been in business varied from just over a year to several decades, proving that it's never too early or too late to be daring and think outside the box when it comes to running your business.

When we first launched the contest we hoped to get a good response, and this year we were once again gratified by the response we got and are impressed that most of the entries we received this year were brand new entrants who had not submitted last year.

So please help us in congratulating this year's winners. And if you missed entering this year's D.A.R.E. Awards, we hope the caliber of all our winners inspires you to participate next year. Stay daring!

Look for the complete story on [www.VisionMonday.com](http://www.VisionMonday.com) where you will also be able to revisit the retailers who claimed the prize in 2011.

### 2011's VM D.A.R.E. Honorees

- **Valley Vision Optometry**,  
Port Alberni, British Columbia
- **St. Charles Vision**,  
New Orleans, La.
- **Eye Care Centers of America/  
Davis Vision**, San Antonio, Texas
- **Eola Eyes**, Orlando, Fla.
- **Shopko Eyecare Centers**,  
Green Bay, Wis.
- **Wilson Eye Center**, Valdosta, Ga.
- **For Eyes Optical**, New York, N.Y.
- **Shady Grove Eye and Vision Care**, Rockville, Md.
- **eyecarecenter**, Rocky Mount, N.C.
- **Coastal Contacts Inc.**, Vancouver, British Columbia
- **Luxtottica Retail/OneSight**, Mason, Ohio
- **Metro Optics**, Bronx, N.Y. ■



— Deirdre Carroll