

**Affiliate Toolkit**

**How to Establish a Virtual Vision Awareness Patch Program with Local Scouts**

Dear Affiliate Leadership:

There are an estimated 4 million boys and girls participating in scouting programs in the United States, with nearly 2 million additional adults who serve as leaders. Programming for these groups starts at the kindergarten level, with many children participating up to and through high school.

In 2019, a vision awareness patch program was been created to help your members start an awareness program to reach out to the thousands of scouts in their community, thanks to the efforts of the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians (NJSOP) supporting current girl scout, paraoptometric and pre-optometry student Marietta Richman. This program can reinforce the importance of eye exams to not just the children, but parents, caregivers, and scout leaders.

The program has been revised to reflect the social distancing and best practices in 2020 during the COVID pandemic. An updated PowerPoint presentation provides the opportunity to present the program virtually to interested scouts.

As doctors of optometry, you know more than anyone that clear and comfortable vision is imperative to help ensure a child’s ability to learn, which can only be assessed through a comprehensive eye exam. This outreach drives awareness of the care you provide to your community. It is also an opportunity to introduce careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), most importantly the profession of optometry, to participants.

Scouting programs are organized in regional/local councils, then by chartering local organizations, such as churches, clubs, civic associations, or educational organization, to implement the scouting program for youth within their communities. Each organization’s website can help you find the regional councils serving your state.

Included in this kit are materials to help your members start a vision awareness program in their community with local scout troops:

* Template email to your membership to introduce the program
* Patch requirements with suggested completion activities
* Template promotional flyer to distribute to local troops to generate interest and invite virtual participation, display in the practice lobby or add content to practice websites
* Template letter to scout troop leaders and parents

In addition to the suggested activities described in the patch requirement documents, you can download resources free of charge from the American Optometric Association’s (AOA) website in the patients and public section, “[Resources for Teachers](https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/resources-for-teachers).” The AOA also offers activity sheets for children in the AOA [Marketplace](https://store.aoa.org/) (aoa.org/store).

You may order the patches directly from Advantage Emblem, [advantageemblem.com](http://www.advantageemblem.com/) (SKU: 4412), and distribute/sell to your membership, or provide the link for them to order as well.

Questions? Please contact Marietta Richman and Maria Richman, O.D. at [dr.richman@verizon.net](mailto:dr.richman@verizon.net), or the NJSOP at NJSOP.org.

Sincerely,

Maria Richman, O.D.

NJSOP Vision Awareness Program Coordinator

**VISION AWARENESS PATCH PROGRAM**

**(Suggested communications to your membership)**

Dear [State affiliate association member],

Here’s a unique community outreach opportunity that you can easily incorporate into your practice, whether virtually or in-person, following your state and local COVID guidelines!

There are thousands of participants in scouting programs across our state, with involvement starting at the kindergarten level. Many children remain involved up to and through high school.

As doctors of optometry, you know more than anyone that clear and comfortable vision is imperative to help ensure a child’s ability to learn, which can only be assessed through a comprehensive eye exam.

A new *vision awareness patch* program, created by the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians supporting girl scout, paraoptometric and pre-optometry student Marietta Richman can help you reach the thousands of children in scouting, and reinforce the importance of eye exams to not just the children, but parents, caregivers, and scout leaders.

This outreach is also an opportunity to introduce careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), most importantly the profession of optometry.

Our state association is making materials and suggested activities available to you and your staff to reach out to scouts, and their parent leaders and other volunteers, to introduce the program.

One of the first activities for earning the patch is visiting a local doctor of optometry’s office. With the appropriate platform, you can do this virtually with your phone, tablet or laptop in lieu of in-person visits. You can connect with local scout troops by discussing this program with your patients who have children active in scouts or by visiting each organization’s regional/metropolitan council which covers your area. From there, you can work together to identify the closest troops to your office.

Another suggestion for generating awareness of your participation is to add content to your website and social media channels, such as:

* *Attention scout leaders! Find out how your troop can earn a Vision Awareness Free Patch! Email us at [email@domain name].*
* *Did you know…your eyes are the size of ping pong balls? If you’re a scout, find out more about your eyes and how you see and earn a Vision Awareness Patch! Find out more by emailing us at [email@domain name].*

Questions? Please contact our office at [State affiliate phone and email].

**Scout Leaders**

**VISION AWARENESS PATCH PROGRAM**

**Suggested activities for completion for your troop**

Visit a doctor of optometry’s office in small groups, or virtually, or have one present via video to your virtual meeting. Locate an optometrist near you by calling [state affiliate name and phone], or visiting [affiliate website for doctor locator]. Then, complete two activities below:

1. Not everyone has 20/20 vision. Learn about nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism and how glasses or contacts can help.

2. Children often experience vision problems that are not easily detected. Learn how vision can affect school activities and how a doctor of optometry can help.

3. The American Optometric Association’s National Save Your Vision Month is March. Make a poster for your school that promotes eye health and good vision practices.

4. Learn about a career in optometry. What optometry schools are located in or near your state? How do you become licensed? What’s an average salary?

5. Depending on state and local COVID restrictions, run an Eyeglass Donation Drive. Contact a local service organization that collects them. A suggestion is to visit <http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/how-we-serve/health/sight/eyeglass-recycling.php>

6. When in-person meetings are feasible, do “activities in the dark.” Divide the Scouts into pairs, having one scout put a blindfold on and the other be non-blindfolded. The blindfolded scout should try some basic activities such as buttoning or zipping a coat, tying shoes, writing, etc. The non-blindfolded scout should lead, explain what is seen and be a guide for safety purposes. Then trade roles. Or, if doing this activity virtually, a parent/caregiver/sibling can be the scout’s partner in the activity. Discuss: How did it feel to not be able to see? How did you accomplish simple activities? What would you do if you met a blind person?

The American Optometric Association has activity sheets for younger children, as well as schematic section of the eye sheets, on its website under “[Resources for Teachers](https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/resources-for-teachers).” Other activities often of interest are optical illusions, making pinhole cameras, drawing and labeling parts of the eye, or demonstrating/observing how the pupil of the eye reacts in light and dark.



ATTENTION : ALL SCOUTS

Earn a Vision Awareness Patch while learning about your eyes and vision.

The activities required for this patch are fun, educational and you get to visit an eye doctor’s office (in-person where allowed, or virtually)!

This opportunity is brought to you by the [State affiliate name].

For more information, please contact:

[contact information here]

**Dear Scouting Group Leaders and Parents/Caregivers,**

Vision is a miraculous and intricate process — something most of us take for granted. Eye problems and concerns should not be thought of as being limited to older people. About 25 percent of school-age children in the United States have vision problems, and it is estimated that more than 150,000 school children suffer eye injuries each year. If their eyes have problems or their vision is limited, their ability to participate in sports, learn in school, and observe the world around them may be significantly impaired and they can easily fall behind their peers. The more young people know about how their eyes work and the regular care the eyes need, the more likely they will be to practice eye safety and preventive eye care throughout their lives.

Brought to you by the [state affiliate optometric association], our goal for this program is to help your group understand the importance of sight, and how regular, comprehensive eye exams by a doctor of optometry can ensure detection, diagnosis, and prevention or treatment of eye conditions.

The Vision Awareness Patch Program offers a first-hand look, whether in person or virtually, at an optometrist’s office and includes several activities that are fun and educational for your scout to enjoy.

It also offers an exposure to a career in the profession, encouraging the possible future study in science and technology.

For more information about eye health and vision care, visit [state affiliate web site].

Sincerely,

[State affiliate president name]

[State affiliate title]