



Executive Director Message

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes”

Mahatma Gandhi



**Dunden Dean
Executive Director**

“Alabama Lions Sight takes services on the road with state’s first Mobile Eye and Vision Clinic”

Article by Carla Davis

For to many low-income residents across rural Alabama, the everyday world is a dim and blurry place. Dunden Dean, Executive Director, Alabama Lions Sight Conservation Association, said 250,000 to 300,000 people statewide can’t afford insurance, don’t qualify for Medicaid or are not old enough for Medicare. Senior citizens are the fastest-growing population in Alabama, yet they are the most underserved, especially when it comes to receiving necessary eye care, he said. To help meet this need, Alabama Lions Sight unveiled a Mobile Eye and Vision Clinic in Birmingham on Feb. 24. Since 1944, Alabama Lions Sight has provided services to more than 350,000 people and has worked to save sight through research, education, detection and treatment. “Many people in rural communities can’t afford eye care, or they don’t have transportation to an area where they can get it, so they basically do without,” Dean said. “We feel like we have an obligation to offer eye care to those communities where people can’t get it.”

The first of its kind in the state, the fully equipped “clinic on wheels” provides comprehensive eye care to senior citizens and indigent people in Alabama’s Black Belt and Appalachian regions. Services include eye exams, case management and patient care coordination, free transportation to prescribed treatment and follow-up support. Patients will be checked for diseases, such as cataracts, glaucoma and diabetes. Those needing glasses will either receive a prescription or have the opportunity to choose from frames available through the clinic. “We see people who haven’t had eye care in a while,” said Dr. Kent Daum, director of the traveling clinic and retired UAB professor of optometry. “We see people who have eye infections, glaucoma or diabetes, or who need glasses, just like other clinics. The difference is the conditions are very concentrated because people haven’t been treated for a long time.” The new clinic has been on the road since Feb. 12, but Alabama Sight actually began piloting its mobile program February of last year. Since then, Dr. Daum has seen over 1,500 patients at 17 healthcare clinics in 14 counties. The mobile clinic has made stops at healthcare centers in Hale, Marengo, Sumter, Perry, Pickens, Dallas, Wilcox, Lowndes, Autauga, Elmore, Chilton,



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Coosa, Greene and Montgomery counties. Some of the many communities that have received visits are Carrollton, Eutaw, Greensboro, Pineapple, Selma, Hayneville and Eclectic.

Dr. Daum said the new self-contained mobile clinic has made a “dramatic difference.” Instead of taking more than an hour a day to load and reload equipment in and out of a panel van, Daum can now spend all his time in each community treating patients. “We’ve had a very exciting first year,” Daum said. “We’ve been out about 186 times. Almost every person we see needs glasses. About a third of our patients have diabetes and 15 percent have glaucoma or something related to it. It’s such a privilege to have the opportunity to help these people.” As part of its efforts to provide lasting support for senior citizens and underprivileged people in rural areas, Alabama Lions Sight plans to establish a vision resource community that will include Lions Clubs, optometrists, ophthalmologists, hospitals and clinics statewide. “We’re excited about really being able to reach out and move into the 21st century as far as providing eye care in the state of Alabama,” Dean said. “Through the mobile clinic, we are actually taking vision services to the communities. We are doing comprehensive eye exams, providing glasses on site and offering free transportation to those who need advanced eye care. Right now, we’re in 14 counties. Our ultimate goal is to be in every county in the state.”

It is through your donations that Alabama Lions Sight can continue to provide these services, so please contribute today and remember, I would love to visit your club and give the members an update on all the great things going on at Callahan and throughout the state by YOUR association, Alabama Lions Sight. Call me at 334-306-4904 or email me at durdendean@yahoo.com

Yours in Lionism,

Sincerely,

Durden

Lion W. Durden Dean
Executive Director