

# ICO

# MATTERS

SUMMER 2022 • V21 ISSUE 1



# 150 YEARS

SAVE  
THE  
DATE

**SEPT 9 - 11**

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Come hang out with us in Lincoln Park and on campus on **September 9-11, 2022.**  
FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT: [ICO.EDU/HOMECOMING](https://ico.edu/homecoming)



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# ICO MATTERS

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# President's Spotlight

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This year, Illinois College of Optometry marks our 150th year of service. It is hard to imagine all the changes that have taken place since our founding in 1872. Yet, through it all, our commitment remains to our students, our patients, and advancing the profession of optometry.

Our roots run deep, and the history of Illinois College of Optometry finds itself permanently embedded in the history of the profession of optometry itself. Both ICO and Optometry have our foundations with Dr. Henry Olin (1872) and his vision to advance eye health care and ensure that future generations of providers would be prepared to carry on and advance the profession. With Dr. George McFatrach, the profession of optometry began to evolve into its own discipline. Many leaders of the profession have come from and through ICO and have been instrumental in developing and advancing the profession.



Mark K. Collip, OD '92

We have had the privilege of seeing generations across families join the ranks of our alumni. We are humbled and proud that the Illinois Eye Institute is home to generations of patients who have and continue to trust us to meet their eye health care needs. We have had the chance to see our mission advance throughout the country and the world as our alumni bring their ICO experience into their own practices and continue to innovate in patient care and the profession.

At ICO, we are honored that we have been able to be a part of advancing the scope of optometric care. We have continued the charge of our founders to be thought leaders and to look for new ways to meet the needs of our students and patients as science and technology open up new ways of practice and to educate our students. Some things we have had the chance to study and implement over time. At other times, like the pandemic, we've had to learn and chart our course day by day and rely on every member of our ICO community to get the job done. Together, we have shown we can do things we never imagined, and we have grown stronger for it.

The pandemic has also taught us an important lesson that we can't simply go back to how things were a few years ago. Things have changed; we all have changed. Instead, we seek to take the good that we have learned and bring that forward to inform how we can be most effective as clinicians and educators. In new and varied ways, technology has become a greater part of everyone's lives and has allowed us to expand our reach and accessibility. None of that takes the place of hands-on, in person training, yet it expands the potential and possibility of helping to triage patients deciding if an issue warrants urgent care or the more effective sharing of information across providers by being able to meet virtually and discuss cases.

Toward that end, we felt strongly that our 150th Anniversary should be a time when we recommit to our Mission and update our strategic plan to carry ICO forward into this momentous new chapter. We took the opportunity to review our mission statement and ensure that it reflects what we believe and do at ICO:

**The mission of Illinois College of Optometry is to develop highly qualified clinical optometrists through excellence in optometric education who will strive to 'seek that all will receive optimal healthcare'.**

The language is slightly different, but it's important that we are clear that everything we do is ultimately directed to ensuring that optimal healthcare for those we serve is our end goal and the responsibility we have to our students, our patients and our profession.

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Our focus remains on admitting highly qualified applicants and providing the state-of-the-art clinical and didactic education that will allow them to reach their fullest potential as clinical optometrists. Through our stewardship of resources and alignment of our focus to the fulfillment of our mission, we will continue to invest financial, human and physical resources that allow us to optimally support the advancement of our mission.

At ICO, we are fortunate to have a world class faculty, who are thought leaders and skilled clinicians, who have educated generations of students. Whether in the classroom, the clinic or the research labs, they strive to ensure that our students are prepared to meet the current and future needs of the profession. Their mentorship has inspired many to seek residencies and to join the faculty at ICO and to become leaders at other institutions. In doing so, they carry forward our mission to the next generation.

Supporting and surrounding our faculty is a dedicated staff who assist in the day-to-day operations and administration of both the College and IEI functions. Often behind the scenes, their work ensures that we recruit the best fits for our academic program and ensure that our students have the resources they need to be successful in their program, that patient schedules run smoothly within the IEI and that our physical campus resources are safe and serve to support and advance our mission.

Our patients, our neighbors in this community, have partnered with us for generations in creating world-class doctors of optometry. We are privileged and honored to be a part of generations of their families and have their trust in providing for their vision care.

As we enter this 150th year of service, we have chosen three pillars to guide and ground us for the work ahead: Research and Education, Patient Care, and Service to our Community — these pillars guide our vision for excellence and bolster our commitment to vision.

**Research and Education:** We are investing in state-of-the art facilities, technology and programs for tomorrow's optometrists to set ICO apart to be the leading optometric institution for science and discovery. This focuses on education, scholarly, and research activity.

**Patient Care:** We will continue to provide independent primary healthcare for the eye and to meet the ophthalmic needs of Chicago's most vulnerable patient populations.

**Serving to our Community:** We commit to promoting a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion within ICO and the communities we serve.

At ICO we have much to be grateful for and much to be proud of as we enter into this 150th year of celebration. Yet our work is not done. Our past informs us and guides us as we continue to fulfill our mission in this time and place. Our work is not done. Together, we make the mission come alive each day. I invite you to take this opportunity to pause and reflect on what your ICO experience has meant to you and how you can contribute to advancing the mission of ICO.

Warmly,  
Mark K. Colip, OD '92



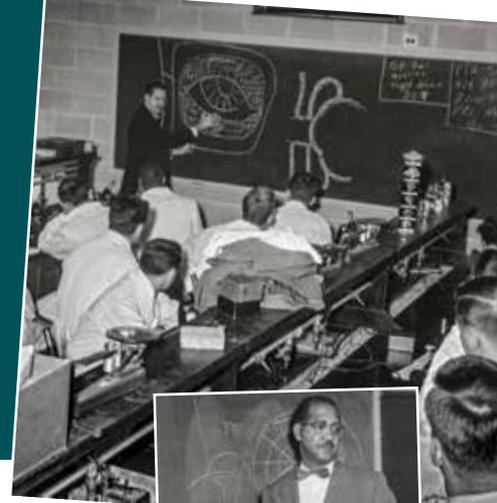
150 YEARS  
COMMUNITY

# ICO THROUGH the DECADES

By: Natalie Bobrowska and Nora Matland

Although reaching 150 years is a momentous milestone, this is not the first big anniversary we have celebrated. Every few years we return to our history. It helps give context to just how far we've come. This year, we wanted to return to our past as seen through the eyes of our students. We spent weeks digging through our archives, pulling up old student newspapers, yearbooks and even a few scrapbooks compiled by each 50-year club, and along the way, we learned a lot about the personal milestones and the many lives who have made the institution what it is today. Here are just a few snapshots of life that we found.

## 1950s



### WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

After years of economic strife followed by a war that spanned three continents, the 50s were a time to look ahead and to leave the hardships of the past decades behind. *I Love Lucy* played on the newly bought televisions and the suburbs were booming. For NICO and CCO, it was a time of transition.

After an influx of optometry students in the late 40s because of the GI Bill, student enrollment began to fall as CCO and NICO (two of ICO's predecessors) moved into the 50s. As the decade progressed, it became clear that two large optometry schools in the same city could not be sustained.

As **Morton Abram** (former president of CCO) recalls, once NICO and CCO started talking about a merger "It was just as simple as that. . . I just thought it was the best thing for optometric education and for the profession." It was agreed that the new campus would be on the newly built CCO campus.

If you were a student at ICO in the 1950s, you would be commuting to two campuses: the newly built ICO campus, where ICO still stands today, as well as CCO's previous campus in Lincoln Park which served as the ICO Eye Clinic. The standard optometric curriculum expanded to include contact lens fittings, occupational vision testing and treatment, and training techniques

to assist patients with reading difficulties. If you were on the ICO campus in 1950, you might even remember the air sirens that Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn set off when it was announced that the Sox won the American League championship.

While women were encouraged to stay home and be dutiful housewives, there were still a rare handful of female students in the 1950s. In addition to a slight increase in female students, there was also a slight increase in African American students. Among them **Clayton C. Powell, OD '52** and **John L. Howlette, OD '51** who went on to found NOA, an incredibly important organization for minority optometrists.

### SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 1954

**President:** Dwight D. Eisenhower

**Billboard Year-End #1 Single:** "Little Things Mean a Lot" by Kitty Kallen

**Cost of Gas:** 29 cents

### CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 1950s:

- Chess Records founded (1950)
- One Prudential Plaza, the first skyscraper to be built since the Great Depression, completed (1955)
- Richard J. Daley elected mayor (1955)

# 1960s

*"I went back into the archives and came up with some pictures taken in the dormitory, Farr Hall, on the IIT campus where we lived in our college days... There are a couple of pictures of the building at ICO in 1963. There is one of me in a newly remodeled exam room. That was all the equipment we used besides the handheld instruments. My how things have changed over the years!"*

*- Larry L. Brandt, OD '63*

## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

The 1960s were a radical period, filled with national civil unrest and international military escalation. For optometry, our professional standing was affirmed by the legal and academic recognition of the Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree.

After the merger of NICO and CCO, enrollment numbers remained low at ICO. In an effort to improve enrollment, ICO launched a fundraising campaign to create an endowment fund to bolster optometric research, to increase the number of faculty members, and to construct more facilities. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed into law the federal Health Professions Educational Assistance Act which allowed optometric and other health-science colleges to receive matching funds. With these funds, along with significant support from CCO and NICO's alumni base, Brady Hall was built. Ground was broken in May 1964, and it was dedicated on May 30th, 1965. That same day, ground was broken for a clinic wing.

The new clinic had 25 refracting rooms and was equipped with state-of-the-art optometric equipment. Another fund-raising effort was driven by the 1960 alumni donors, which helped to furnish and equip examination rooms. By autumn, three fully equipped rooms were installed. Nine years later, a two-story extension to the eye clinic was constructed with 40 additional examination rooms. This included extra

space for instruction and practical application of contact lenses and visual training, among other services. By the fall of 1969, the new ICO Eye Clinic and the Alumni Memorial Instructional Wing were completed. Both buildings were dedicated in October of 1969.

Other newly formed federal aid programs to educational institutions underwrote much of ICO's 1960s development. This included federally funded student loans and scholarships. With the combination of federal funding and an increase in enrollment, ICO had finally reached financial stability.



## SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 1965

President: Lyndon B. Johnson

Billboard Year-End #1 Single: "Wooly Bully" by Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs

Cost of Gas: 30 cents

## CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 1960s:

- The Beatles in Chicago (1966)
- The Chicago Picasso dedicated (1967)
- The Democratic National Convention (1968)

# 1970s

*"Remember your first meal at Brady Hilton? I believe it was meatloaf au gasoline. None of us ever had a great appetite for the "Hilton" cuisine after that initiating episode. Fortunately, the cooking has improved with Gus oftentimes bending backwards to try to satisfy everyone's varied tastes. Of course, Mama Mia's smile always made the food taste a little better."*

From: "Parting Thoughts and Shots" by Peter Lucia, OD '74, *New Breed*, June 1974



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Change was in the air in the 70s. Buoyed by the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement of the 60s, more minorities and women entered ICO than ever before.

Of course, it is never easy being a minority. As **Vanessa Pagan, OD '73** wrote in the school newspaper "One would guess that being the only girl would be an advantage of sorts. I found quite the opposite - my sex is a handicap; one in both my clinical as well as class work, needing to prove at times that being a girl is not a handicap in my work . . . They often question a girl's true dedication with regard to the fact that their career may be shortened by marriage and other 'little' interruptions."

For students, life revolved around classes and clinic, and potentially the ICO basketball team. If you were single, you most likely lived in Brady Hall. When you moved in, "Mom" Louise distributed keys, bedspreads, and pillows. And if you stayed in Brady Hall all four years, you'd receive a \$1 bill with the inscription: "Here's the beginning of your first million. Louise Deppiesse, your ICO housemother."

For the newly elected president, **Dr. Alfred A. Rosenbloom**, it was also a time of expansion and specialization. After the 1940s,



research funding shifted from being mostly corporate sponsored to being government sponsored. This meant that life sciences had access to more funding and ICO took full advantage of this. 1975 was an especially exciting year because that year ICO acquired a VER computer through a National Eye Institute grant. Both an Infant Care Clinic and a Geriatric Clinic were opened in the 70s. In 1978, ICO's residency programs began.

ICO also sought to institutionalize minority recruitment. They hired a director for the Minority Recruitment and Retention Program, and they implemented a scholarship program called "Promise to go Back" which funded students who pledged to work in minority neighborhoods after graduation. In 1973, ICO was recognized by NOA as the "College of the Year" in recognition of their efforts to recruit minority students.

A special exhibit on Optometry and Vision was held at the Museum of Science and Industry. And in 1977, ICO students participated in their very first VOSH mission to Haiti in partnership with the Indiana VOSH chapter.

## SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 1973

President: Richard Nixon

Billboard Year-End #1 Single: "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" by Tony Orlando and Dawn

Cost of Gas: 39 cents

## CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 1970s:

- Union Stockyard Closes (1971)
- Sears Tower tallest building in the world (1974)
- The Blizzard of 1979

# 1980s



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Oh, the 80s, all those padded shoulders and that big hair. The last decade to be completely free of internet and personal computers in the home. A time when, if you wanted to replay a song, you would have to wait until it came on the radio and rush to press record on your Walkman. There was economic growth after years of stagflation and optometry was being recognized as a primary health care field.

Much of this development was rooted in important legislation that occurred in the 70s. In 1971, Rhode Island was the first state to allow optometrists the use of diagnostic pharmaceutical agents. In 1978, a federal amendment asserted that optometrists were the "best suited by training and practice to deliver primary vision services". Medical optometry was here to stay.

In the early 1980s, if you were a student at ICO, you probably collected quite a few dust particles as you walked around campus because nearly every part of campus seemed to be under construction. By 1985, ICO had added over 50,000 square feet. Although they have been modernized since, many of the facilities we walk through today were built during this era including: the lecture hall, the clinic, and the library.

If you were a student in the 80s you also spent quite a few Friday nights at Blindspot. "The beauty of Blindspot was that it was in the basement of Brady Hall, and

it gave us a terrific opportunity to get together and interact informally over a beer. It really helped to solidify that common bond between the professors and the students. On a Friday afternoon, after class and after clinic, there was no better place to be than at the Blindspot," said **Leonard Messner, OD** in a recent interview.

**Dr. Leonard Messner** who joined ICO in the late 80s noted "It was amazing the bonding that occurred between the new faculty and the students at ICO . . . There's no way we could have built the medical model of optometry that we (myself, **Dean Stephanie Messner**, and **Dr. John Baker**) set out to build if the students hadn't bought into this new philosophy of eye care delivery as well . . . Whether they knew it or not, the students in the 80s were blazing a new trail in optometry. They were building something special, and the institution we have today is built upon their shoulders."



*"I have visited all but two of the optometry schools and I'm convinced we have the resources and the potential to be the best clinical teaching institution of optometry in the world . . . My goal as dean is to do that with the appropriate mix of professional environment as well as academic rigor"*

Dean John Cromer  
From "Questions for the Dean",  
*The Focus*, Nov.-Dec. 1983



## SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 1988

President: George H. W. Bush

Billboard Year-End #1 Single: "Faith" by George Michael

Cost of Gas: 90 cents

## CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 1980s:

- Harold Washington, first Black mayor, elected (1983)
- Michael Jordan drafted (1984)
- Super Bowl XX: Bears (46) v. Patriots (10) (1986)
- Oprah Winfrey's first show (1986)



# 1990s



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Remember when everyone's search engine was Yahoo! and the internet was almost always referred to as the World Wide Web? Remember when pop culture transitioned from

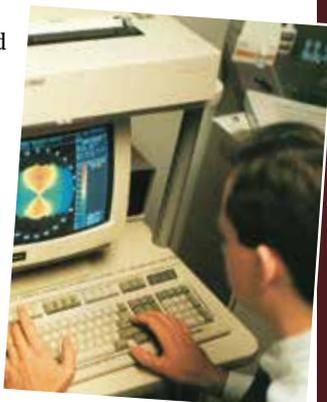
Nirvana to Backstreet Boys in the blink of an eye? In optometry, the previous decades had changed how optometry was practiced. Now ICO worked to formalize the relationships between healthcare providers and the Illinois Eye Institute.

The medical model of optometry that was built in the late 1970s and 80s owes a lot to one man: **Dr. Charles F. Mullen**. After working at NECO in the 70s, serving as the executive director of the Eye Institute at PCO in the 80s, and serving as the Director of Optometry Services at the Department of Veteran Affairs, Dr. Mullen arrived on ICO's campus as our 4th president.

After the significant infrastructural changes implemented in the 80s, there was a change when Dr. Mullen joined ICO. As he says, "We immediately made a philosophical shift from emphasis on facility development to emphasis on programmatic improvements and on the personal service provided to our students, patients and alumni." When he left six years later, student externships had expanded from nine sites to 144 sites, and clinical encounters had increased from 500 hours to more than 1260 hours by graduation.

In 1997, a landmark agreement was reached between ICO and the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Science at the University of Chicago. This was the second such agreement in the country. This significantly increased the opportunity for collaborative research, shared lectures and expanded our clinical base. 25 years later, this partnership continues to run strong as anyone who has attended a recent ICO CE event knows.

At ICO, this was also the first decade where more women than men graduated from the institution.



The 90s were the last days of the Brady "Hilton." By the new millennium, the Residence Complex had been built, and Brady was converted into office spaces. Some of our favorite social events also began at this time: ICO Olympics, BooBash, Practice Opportunities Symposium and Eyeball were all pillars of student life in the 90s.

The ICO Courtyard, built in the 80s, continued to host more than a few Blindspots where students and faculty hung out and networked.



## SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 1996

**President:** Bill Clinton

**Billboard Year-End #1 Single:**

"Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix)" by Los del Rio

**Cost of Gas:** \$ 1.23

## CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 1990s:

- US Steel South Works Closes (1992)
- The Chicago Bulls win (1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997)
- Barack Obama elected to state senate (1996)

# 2000s & Beyond



## WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Life seems to have sped up in the last two decades. With the advent of social media and the ever-growing presence of devices, student life has been redefined, and technology has fundamentally changed how students interact with their education. “In previous decades, there was

an understanding your education would be ‘one-size fits all.’ Now, our program provides education in lots of different modalities. Students have a lot more ways they can learn whether that be through handouts or reviewing lectures online. That’s very different than putting everyone in a room and having someone lecture at them,” says **Geoffrey Goodfellow, OD '01** who graduated at the dawn of the new millennium.

At the same time, the reason why students commit to the optometric profession has remained the same. Student commitment to patient care and the excellence of our clinical education remains the fundamental reason why students choose ICO. “There are definitely more patient care experiences built into the curriculum these days. I saw my first patient in my third year. That was the norm back then. Now students see patients in the CAP program in their first year,” continues Dr. Goodfellow.

Over the last 20 years, our facilities have expanded to meet current optometric needs. In 2008 the EyePod was built, in 2011 the Lecture Center was renovated, in 2014 the library was tackled. “The scope of practice and what an optometrist needs to know, keeps on growing,” said Dr. Goodfellow. Luckily, our facilities have kept up with these changes. At the same time, there was a growing recognition that the clinic also needed to be updated. In 2015 the *Alfred and Sarah Rosenbloom Center on Vision and Aging* was opened, followed in 2018 by the *Dr. Robert and Lena Lewenson Center for Pediatric and Binocular Vision*.



In 2001, ICO became the very first optometry institution to receive a Robert Wood Johnson Grant with which they founded Vision of Hope. VOH is an outreach program that targets adults who are under/ uninsured and therefore are unable to receive their needed eye care. “As a not-for-profit we have always had a heart for helping patients that are un/underinsured. I think the IEI does a good job of providing care to all patients, and we figure out the billing part afterwards. There’s always a way to help patients one way or another,” says Dr. Goodfellow.

ICO has had many pillars of our community, but for students of the 2000s, Anthony Barone is one who will not be quickly forgotten. That smiling face at the front desk. The first face to greet each of the students as they walked onto campus from their interview day to commencement.

And of course, most importantly, the very first publication of ICO Matters was in the autumn of 2000. There used to be two newsletters: Alumni Matters (mailed to alumni of ICO), and ICO Matters (distributed internally). These two merged together in 2000 to simply be called ICO Matters.



## SNAPSHOT OF LIFE, 2006

**President:** George W. Bush

**Billboard Year-End #1 Single:** “Bad Day” by Daniel Powter

**Cost of Gas:** \$2.81

## CHICAGO'S TALK OF THE TOWN in 2000s and Beyond:

- Cloud Gate installed in Millennium Park (2006)
- 900 cars abandoned on Lake Shore Drive during blizzard (2011)
- Cubs win World Series (2016)
- Renaming of several iconic roads: Congress Parkway to Ida B. Wells Drive (2018), Lake Shore Drive to Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable Lake Shore Drive (2021)

with



## Yi Pang, MD, OD, PhD, FAAO

Professor of Optometry; Associate Dean for Research

No department on campus has grown as quickly as our research department over the past few years. This is in large part due to **Dr. Yi Pang's** vision. Through governmental and corporate research grants, ICO is currently conducting over 90 studies. This will only expand with the coming of the new Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center. Dr. Pang discusses advances in research and the newly founded research center.

### What's one thing that you would want people to know about your specific field?

ICO has always had an incredibly strong clinical program, but our research reputation was not as strong. Still, the most important element, an amazing patient population, has always been there.

Our patients are fundamental to who ICO is, and we were able to expand our research because of them. When I arrived at ICO in 2005, we had never taken part in an NIH-funded clinical trial, now we've completed over 20. It was a lot of hard work implementing best practices within research. Luckily, our institution and ICO leadership have always supported research. I have always felt that at ICO, you are empowered to make important and necessary changes. It was slow going in the beginning, but we have sped up immensely in the past few years. A little more than ten years since I arrived, we have more than 90 active studies, and

in one year alone, we doubled the number of student presentations at the American Academy of Optometry. It's amazing to see just how robust our research has become. Faculty, residents, students – they all have opportunities to do research. Because of our patient population, we can focus on the specialties that interest them whether that's glaucoma, cornea and contact lenses, or myopia control.

### **How has ICO changed since you arrived at ICO? And what has remained the same?**

The biggest change for me is what we have accomplished in research. ICO is being recognized throughout the country for its high-quality research. Our students have received awards from many prestigious organizations. We are competing against other optometry schools and larger public health schools, and even against these larger schools we stand our ground; we're still being recognized.

What's remained the same is the faculty commitment. I feel a strong dedication to ICO. That's in large part because of the faculty and staff at ICO. Whenever I ask a faculty member to do something extra in research, I have never gotten a "no." Most of the research faculty members conduct at ICO is not something already set on their schedule, it's an extra ask and it's a lot of hard work. The dedication from our faculty amazes me daily.

### **How will the Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center help expand research at ICO?**

The Wesley Research Center came about in part because of a research study Drs. Harthan, Kattouf and I conducted on how orthokeratology can help control myopia. It's exciting to see how the research we are doing now might have helped our research center's namesake.

As our research has expanded, our needs have also grown. Many clinical trials have specific standards that must be met. That might mean maintaining research subjects' files or keeping a certain medication at the required temperature. Our current space just was not adequate for our research needs. The Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center will triple the size of our current clinical research suite. We finally have space for our expanding research projects: we'll have six exam lanes, more space for pre-testing, and even space for things as mundane as storage of patient files.

# PATIENT STORIES

COMING SOON



**Patients are the reason our doctors show up every single day.** Our alumni, students, and faculty agree, they are the doctors they are today because of the patients they saw at the IEI. As part of our 150th anniversary, we're telling the story of some of these patients. Stay tuned for later in the summer when we launch our patient stories. **You won't want to miss it!**

[youtube.com/ICOoptometry](https://youtube.com/ICOoptometry)

# vision of



## Meeting **Community Needs** at the Illinois Eye Institute By: Sheila Quirke

**I**man Moore is a legacy patient at the Illinois Eye Institute on campus at Illinois College of Optometry. His first clinic appointment at the Illinois Eye Institute (IEI) was as a 6- or 7-year-old. His mother has been an active patient since she was seventeen. His grandmother, uncle, and other family members have all been treated there dating back to the 1960s, when it opened as the ICO Eye Clinic.

Iman Moore is now the Clinical Coordinator at IEI for Urgent Care and Referral Management and Co-Chair of the Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Committee of ICO. His pride in the work is palpable. Mr. Moore is in a unique

position to have experienced IEI both as a patient and now as an integral part of patient care.

In his role, Moore sees first-hand how important the treatment that patients enrolled in the Vision of Hope program (VOH) is for them and the larger community, "IEI is unique. Most folks can go anywhere to get eye exams in 30-40 minutes. Here, our patients receive a thorough exam that takes two hours, including the education they need for eye health. It's not just an exam, but an educational tool."

That includes every VOH patient.

Vision of Hope has provided  
**20,000+**  
comprehensive eye exams.

“IEI is unique. Most folks can go anywhere to get eye exams in 30-40 minutes. Here, our patients receive a thorough exam that takes two hours, including the education they need for eye health. It’s not just an exam, but an educational tool.”

*Iman Moore*

*Clinical Coordinator for Urgent Care and Referral Management*



VOH was started in 2001 as an alliance of local agencies and healthcare providers funded with grants from the State of Illinois and the Washington Square Health Foundation. The original intent of the program was to link un/underinsured patients to primary eye care services at IEI. Twenty years into the program, its need has never been more urgent or necessary. The evidence is in the data:

- VOH has provided over 20,000 patients with comprehensive eye exams
- More than 15,000 patients have received eyeglasses or contact lenses
- 60% of VOH patients have required advanced ophthalmic care
- 5% of VOH patients have received surgical care for eye disease
- 70% of VOH patients also suffer from some type of systemic disease
- VOH serves 1,000 patients annually
- Over 90% of the IEI patient base consists of underrepresented minorities

The ongoing cost for care provided to VOH patients is roughly \$300,000 annually. Overall, that might not seem like a lot of money and something that the institution could adequately budget for or absorb. The reality is far more nuanced and complicated.

“It’s disheartening to live in the United States, one of the richest countries in the world, and see that there are people going without healthcare. The Affordable Care Act brought the number of people without insurance from double digits into single digits, which is great, but there are still tremendous gaps in Medicaid coverage,” says **Leonard Messner, OD**, Vice President for Strategy and Institutional Advancement and a practicing optometrist on the IEI Advanced Care team.

Medicaid reimbursement is typically low and only one reimbursement is allowed per patient encounter. That means if a Medicaid patient is seen at IEI for a clinic visit, only one of the tests, procedures or panels that is necessary for appropriate care and diagnosis can be submitted for reimbursement, regardless of the clinical necessity of them to the plan of care.

These gaps in funding are significant and leave Medicaid patients even more vulnerable. They are already at a disadvantage being un/underinsured and are significantly more at risk to be living with a systemic disease like diabetes or hypertension. “We see a disproportionate share of Medicaid patients. We run the



*"I worked at a different eye clinic in the city for twenty-two years and I never saw the degree of pathology I see here at IEI. Right now, we have over one hundred people on the waiting list for cataracts! Clinical care is important here and I see what a difference good quality care provided with dignity makes."*

*Maureen Dwyer  
Clinical Practice Manager*

tests," says Dr. Messner, "and end up eating the costs for them. It's the right thing to do for our patients, and we do it. I don't see a bright light at the end of this tunnel. "

There are now twenty-eight different Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that refer patients to IEI for care. Most of those patients are un/underinsured and qualify for treatment under VOH, but the numbers are overwhelming and the current capacity to serve them all is in jeopardy. IEI does not qualify for government funds or grants that provide the enhanced reimbursements that hospitals and FQHC's receive.

"As a teaching program, these are the cases you want to see, but they don't pay the bills," says Dr. Messner, "We've been fortunate to have [Congressional] Representative Bobby Rush in our district and we've received support from foundations, but those funds do not cover the full cost of clinical services. We make a profound impact, and I can't say strongly enough what an honor and privilege it is to serve our patients who are extraordinarily valued."

That patient base includes the VOH patients with the most complicated care profiles living in extreme poverty in communities with historic disinvestment. These patients are now experiencing even greater need given the healthcare inequities that always existed, but have been made more obvious during the COVID pandemic. Dr. Messner uses this analogy, "It's like someone has turned on a hose and never turned it off. I saw it at both ends of the barrel when I came to Chicago in the late 1980s. If you can handle our patient population, you can handle any patient. The need is there and continues to build. We need the resources to meet those needs."

**Maureen Dwyer** is the Clinical Practice Manager at IEI and could not agree more. In her role in the clinical setting, she is tasked with linking VOH patients to referrals and other avenues of care, "My biggest frustration is telling people they need to go somewhere else for care. I work hard to figure out a way to get patients the care they need here, but it's not always possible."

[ **60%** of Vision of Hope patients require advanced ophthalmic care. ]

She agrees with Dr. Messner that the VOH patients served at IEI are unique, “I worked at a different eye clinic in the city for twenty-two years, and I never saw the degree of pathology I see here at IEI. Right now, we have over one hundred people on the waiting list for cataract surgery! Clinical care is important here and I see what a difference good quality care provided with dignity makes.”

Ms. Dwyer puts her money where her mouth is. Each year, she donates some of her income to the VOH patients at IEI, “I’m not wealthy, but I will continue to give. Losing vision is terrifying, but when we catch a diagnosis early, we can prevent blindness. It’s gratifying to see the smiles on faces. People are so happy when their vision is restored and it’s contagious.”

Mr. Moore knows those same joys and frustrations Ms. Dwyer describes, “I’ve been on both sides of the coin. If you’ve never been in the situations our patients are in and faced those challenges, it can be hard to understand. There is a lack of financial resources to cover co-pays and even getting time off from work is hard. I would ask our alumni to think back to the patients they saw as 3rd and 4th year students, beyond primary eye care. You provided help, person to person. You guided them. Remember those feelings you got, that twinkle in the eyes of patients who see better? Remember your white coat ceremony and the oath you took?”

That oath Mr. Moore refers to is the Optometric Oath, recognized by the American Optometric Association, and includes the following pledges recited by each 2nd and 4th year student at their White Coat Ceremonies and graduation:

I WILL provide professional care for the diverse populations who seek my services, with concern, with compassion and with due regard for their human rights and dignity.

I WILL work to expand access to quality care and improve health equity for all communities.

I WILL place the treatment of those who seek my care above personal gain and strive to see that none shall lack for proper care.

These patients have been invaluable to the training and education of ICO students since our beginnings. Help us honor the oath you took and help us ensure that Vision of Hope patients continue to receive dignified care at IEI. Let’s continue our commitment to quality patient care, no matter their ability to pay.

[ **15,000+** Vision of Hope patients have received eyeglasses or contact lenses. ]



To speak to someone about making a gift to the Vision of Hope program please contact the **Development Office** at **312.949.7073** or **development@ico.edu**.



*Sarah and Al Rosenbloom.*

## AL ROSENBLUM JR. AND SUE TOBERT

- Sarah's Fund
- Area of focus: Low Vision Aides and Devices for Patients

Anyone familiar with Illinois College of Optometry (ICO) knows the name of Rosenbloom, but most probably associate it with former dean and past president of ICO, **Alfred Rosenbloom, OD '48**. Right next to Dr. Rosenbloom, in life and on the sign that greets visitors to the Illinois Eye Institute clinic that bears his name, *The Alfred and Sarah Rosenbloom Center on Vision and Aging*, is his wife Sarah.

Alfred and Sarah were a team. Married sixty-six years, the couple had two children, Al and Sue, who now do for Sarah what she did for Alfred by supporting a familial legacy with deep roots in low-vision rehabilitation and a renewed emphasis on patient care with the creation of **Sarah's Fund**.

Sarah's Fund is focused on helping patients obtain the low vision aides and devices they need to help remain an active part of their communities, from high tech gadgets to specialized lamps to low tech magnifiers. When vision is preserved, even if it is limited, an individual patient's quality of life is preserved right along with it. Connections with family, worship centers, neighborhoods, and work or volunteering are important factors in maintaining a full and joyful life, the kind of life that Sarah herself enjoyed.

When they speak about Sarah, Sue and Al's eyes light up. "Mom was vivacious with high energy. She would light up a room! She was an active volunteer at ICO, but also at the Museum of Science of Industry and the Cultural Center. She loved to host and had conversations with everyone she met, and once you met, you were family," says Sarah's daughter, Sue Tobert.

That extended to many within the ICO community. Al Rosenbloom recalled some of the parties the couple hosted for students when Dr. Rosenbloom was Dean of ICO, "In their partnership, Dad was the professional side and Mom was the social side. She made everything lively and was all inclusive."

Sue identifies why these low vision aides were so important to Sarah, "Mom's interest came through Dad's specialty. As she saw her circle of friends growing old and being impacted themselves by macular degeneration and glaucoma, she felt and understood the needs of low vision in a more personal way."

Al agrees, "Mom had a continual engagement at the Center on Vision and Aging. She knew that patient care is about quality of life and better vision allows for a better life." Both of Sarah's children agree that this fund, launched in tribute to her life and legacy, fits with her spirit of wanting to help people.

"Low vision and patient care are about learning to understand and appreciate. Mom understood that as a partner to Dad in all the things he threw himself into. As Dad began to sunset, Mom began to rise and expand and make good on their joint legacy," Al says, his pride unmistakable.



*(L-R) President Mark K. Colip, OD '92, Sue Tobert, Al Rosenbloom Jr., and Linda Gorman.*



## ROY WESLEY, OD, AND VICTORIA GRANACKI

- Newton K. Wesley Research Center
- Area of focus: Research Expansion

When **Dr. Newton K. Wesley** was diagnosed with keratoconus, a warping of the cornea that impacted his vision and would have led to his blindness, he understood that the treatment he was seeking for himself could only be found through education and research.

History confirms he was right.

The emphasis that Dr. Newton Wesley placed on those things in the 1940s while he was chasing innovations in contact lenses is the same emphasis that ICO is placing on education and research today to mark its sesquicentennial year, thanks to a generous donation from **Dr. Roy Wesley**, Newton's son, himself an OD with a PhD in cellular molecular biology to boot. The valuing of education and research clearly runs in the family.

"Dad, of course, had a history with ICO and taught there and recruited students with the same diagnosis specifically to work on this problem. He understood that when your own personal needs are addressed, you can apply the solution to others who have the same needs."

Dr. Roy Wesley is looking forward to the naming ceremony and opening of the **Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center** on ICO's campus, made possible after the Newton K. Wesley Foundation pledged a financial commitment in 2016 to preserve the elder Dr. Wesley's legacy, including his passion for research and education.

The Center will enable ICO's students, residents, and faculty to further ophthalmic research, expand clinical trials, and address those emerging and unmet vision needs that exist today, just like Dr. Newton Wesley did for keratoconus in the 1940s, though in a much more sophisticated and state-of-the-art facility than the apartment basement where he conducted much of his research!



*President Mark K. Colip, OD '92, bestows upon Roy Wesley, OD the honorary degree of Doctor of Science in Optometry.*

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"Education is such an important part of our culture. The only way we will breach the divide we have is by investing in education. It is vital to understanding science and to avoid losing a shared scientific truth."

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Dr. Roy Wesley is thrilled and could not be prouder, as he values education and research in the same way his father did, to donate to ICO, "Education is such an important part of our culture. The only way we will breach the divide we have is by investing in education. It is vital to understanding science and to avoid losing a shared scientific truth. Research is key and education is fundamental. We must maintain our standards of what is known and acknowledged as truth, scientific and otherwise."

As an optometrist himself, Dr. Roy Wesley wants others in the field to feel empowered and committed to give back to the profession that has enriched the lives of so many professionals, "The work of optometrists requires education and hard effort. Everybody who has worked in the field can be grateful for the tools they have to do the job. We have a responsibility to give back and should not forget the hard work institutions like ICO put in to provide the services they do, both for students and for patients. Be grateful and give back."



After a two-year hiatus, ICO faculty and staff, our '22 graduates, family, and friends, all returned to Symphony Center to celebrate the Class of 2022. Finally, after so many hardships, we were all able to come together and celebrate all the hard work and dedication that is needed to become a Doctor of Optometry. Families streamed in with flowers and contagious excitement to commemorate this momentous occasion. "It takes passion to get the most out of this educational program. It takes passion to rise above the daily grind and to excel and achieve at the level required by ICO's faculty. You've each done that, and you've done it quite well. You've achieved something truly remarkable and something truly special," remarked President **Mark K. Colip, OD '92** during his address to the graduates.

Of particular note was this year's commencement speaker, **Dr. Roy Wesley**, son of **Newton K. Wesley, OD** a professor at Monroe College of Optometry. Addressing the graduates, he said, "I must admit that I am absolutely in awe of each and every one of you. You have earned your degree coming through 2+ years of the COVID pandemic. I wish I could hear your stories of achievement . . . and struggle during this period." Dr. Roy Wesley took us back to a time when schools taught nothing about contact lenses and much of what is currently taught was still being developed and researched. Dr. Newton K. Wesley was able to grow the field of contact lenses despite many hardships including the incarceration of his family in a Japanese internment camp during WWII. Recognizing the hardships this class has had to go through, Dr. Wesley said, "use the obstacles in your life as steppingstones to create a new and better future. Let your dreams be open to the opportunities as they show up in your life." "Dream, imagine and act to create a better future." In recognition of Dr. Roy Wesley's many accomplishments, ICO bestowed upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science in Optometry.

There are 132 ICO students in this graduating class. They come from 29 different states, 3 foreign countries, and 5 Canadian provinces. 35% graduated with high honors and nearly 1/3 will head on to residencies next year. Dr. Colip ended his speech by saying, "ICO Class of 2022, you are going to do great things." We couldn't agree more. Congratulations again, Class of 2022. We can't wait to see what the future will bring!

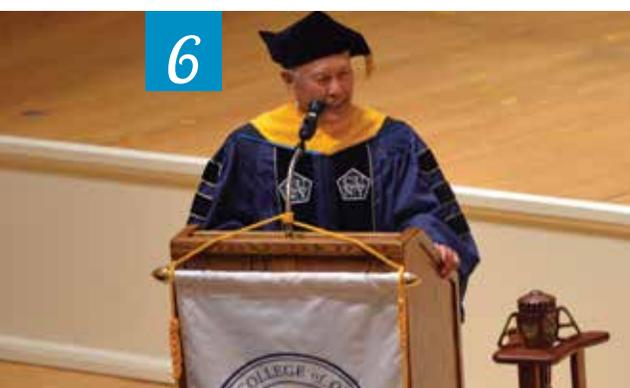
- 1 Flag bearers **Diana Masolak '24** and **Karli Clark '25**.
- 2 Dean **Stephanie Messner, OD**, recognizes **Soo Jung Lee** as this year's valedictorian.
- 3 The **Doonaree Pipe Band** plays "Scotland the Brave".
- 4 **Tracy Matchinski, OD '95**, carrying the presidential mace leads the processional.
- 5 ICO President **Mark Colip, OD '92**, welcomes the Class of 2022.
- 6 ICO commencement speaker **Roy Wesley, OD** addresses the Class of 2022.
- 7 **Denise Alexopoulos, OD '17**, administers the optometric oath.
- 8 **Nana Owusu, OD '08**, President of the Alumni Council, welcomes the class to the Alumni Association.
- 9 ICO's Graduate and Faculty Chorus sing the Alma Mater.
- 10 Students from the Class of 2022 celebrate outside the Chicago Symphony Hall.



Rewatch Commencements  
livestream on ICO's  
You Tube Channel.



Download over 300 photos  
on ICO's Flickr page.



# Dr. Bess in BRONZEVILLE:

A Story of the 'Great Migration'

Story and Photos By: Sheila Quirke





*Bess Coleman, OD '34, class composite photo from the Northern Illinois College of Optometry (NICO).*

Over 500,000 Black Americans made their way from Southern states to Chicago during the Great Migration in search of more opportunities and less oppression. **Bess Coleman, OD '34**, was one of them.

The first Black woman to register and work as an optometrist in the United States has a story that is shaped as much by her internal drive and ambitions as it was the roles and limitations placed on her as a Black woman in early 20th century America. The decade she spent in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, from 1925-1935, overlapped with the community's cultural and economic heyday when it was known as the "Black Metropolis" to some and the "Black Belt" to others.

Bess Anderson Francis, known as Bessie to her family, was born in Harrodsburg, Kentucky in August 1893, the eldest of six children in the Francis family. Harrodsburg was a railroad town with a population of close to 3,500 in the 1890s. Mr. Charles and Mrs. Emma Lucy Francis, Bess' parents, were pillars of the community and owned a barbershop in town, a business that afforded them a degree of social and economic status with both its Black and white residents.

The Francis siblings attended the "West Side Colored School," a public school a couple of blocks from the family home. It was described as a "two story shack" with an outhouse and was located directly behind the city dump. Mr. Francis may have been allowed to cut the hair of white men, but he could not live next door to them, nor could his children be educated in the same schools their white children attended.

Each of the Francis children would go on to earn degrees, which was typical among their social circles. Mr. and Mrs. Francis emphasized the importance of knowledge, education, and professional achievements for their children. Bess would become a teacher at her West Side alma mater at the age of 18 and work there for over a decade.

For young Bess, going to school to become a teacher would have been an affirmative step in building the kind of life her family expected of her. Helping professions like teaching, healthcare, or social work were all acceptable for educated young women. As a Black woman, having a teaching position allowed Bess to become a leader within the Black community and maintain her status of respectability within the white community.

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***Monument To The Great Northern Migration***  
*by Alison Saar, sculptor.*

“She watched the optometrist and she said, ‘I can do this,’ so he [Mr. Coleman] sent her to Northern Illinois College of Optometry (NICO).”

Bess’ time as an educator came to an end with her marriage to Mr. John Coleman in 1923. Mr. Coleman had also grown up in Harrodsburg with a similar family background and had done some traveling and studying outside Kentucky. He was intent on becoming a business owner after earning his pharmacy license in 1922. The couple moved to West Palm Beach, Florida and lived there for two years while Mr. Coleman learned the trade from a mentor.

The couple arrived in Chicago in 1925, settling in Bronzeville. Mr. Coleman would go on to own and operate three pharmacies in the community. Bess, now Mrs. Coleman, experienced two miscarriages before giving birth to her only child, a son, John, Jr., in 1927. Like many women of her era, Mrs. Coleman did not work outside the home during her early years of motherhood, though Mr. and Mrs. Coleman each had hopes and ambitions to achieve economic success and professional advancement as individuals.

The Bronzeville that existed when the Colemans moved there was nationally recognized as a thriving Black cultural and economic hub, akin to New York City’s Harlem. Given Chicago’s racially restrictive covenants used between 1916-1948, it was also one of the very few places Black people could live in the city. Black leaders in every field called it home because they had to, given the laws that codified segregation. If you were accomplished like Jesse Owens or Ida B. Wells or Louis



Bess Coleman's, OD '34, class photo from Northern Illinois College of Optometry. Dr. Bess is seated in the first row fifth from the left.

Armstrong or Duke Ellington, you were still required to live within the boundaries of Bronzeville, as were the Colemans and others in Chicago's Black professional class.

Natalie Moore, author of *The South Side* and a reporter at Chicago's public radio station, WBEZ, gives added context, "This was during the first wave of the Great Migration and not too long after the 1919 race riots in Chicago. There was an influx of migrants that were confined to the Black Belt. The community was tight knit, but bursting at the seams with overcrowding. There is a tendency to romanticize Bronzeville because it had Black owned businesses and a vibrant cultural scene, but its residents faced discrimination and were treated as second class citizens."

One of the apartments where the Colemans lived during their time in Bronzeville was a massive housing development of over 400 units surrounding a lush interior green courtyard called the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments. The structure was built by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald in 1929, then president of Sears, Roebuck & Company, who had an ongoing interest in funding housing and education initiatives for Black communities in the urban North and rural South.



This illustration of NICO is taken from NICO's 1934 yearbook. The top photo shows the work that was being done in the early 1930s. This led to a 5000 sq ft expansion of the NICO's facilities.

The apartments were intended to provide affordable housing for working-class Black people migrating from the South. John Coleman, Jr. described their building in a 1986 oral history as, "... a block square with a garden inside. It was supposed to have been for underprivileged Blacks, but it was such a nice building that the professional people moved in." It was while living here that the Colemans began to prosper financially. In 1930, Mrs. Coleman traveled back home to Harrodsburg for the opening celebration of a new high school for Black students that Mr. Rosenwald had also financed and built.

During this time, Mrs. Coleman expressed interest in pursuing a law degree, but Mr. Coleman objected. It is not documented why, but the law's loss would become optometry's gain. With John, Jr. preparing to start school, Mrs. Coleman was looking for something to engage herself professionally and intellectually that her husband would support. One day, while accompanying her husband to an eye exam, John Jr. recounted that "She watched the optometrist and she said, 'I can do this,' so he [Mr. Coleman] sent her to Northern Illinois College of Optometry (NICO)."

NICO would later merge with the Chicago College of Optometry in 1955 to become the Illinois College of Optometry (ICO), but in the fall of 1932 it was under the leadership of **Dr. William B. Needles** and located further east than today's campus. At the age of 39, Mrs. Bess



The Rosenwald Apartments where Dr. Coleman and her husband lived. This massive structure covers a full city block at 4648 S. Michigan Avenue. Notable residents included Nat "King" Cole, writer Lorraine Hansberry, actress Marla Gibbs, Duke Ellington, and Quincy Jones among others.

There is a tendency to romanticize Bronzeville because it had Black owned businesses and a vibrant cultural scene, but its residents faced discrimination and were treated as second class citizens."

*Natalie Moore, author of The South Side*

Coleman became the first female Black student at NICO. The color barrier had been broken several years earlier, but not for women. Mrs. Bess Coleman was a pioneer.

NICO boasted of having a state-of-the-art facility with 12,000 square feet of teaching space, a surgical theater, a clinic with twenty exam rooms, an onsite lab, an auditorium, and gymnasium. In 1932, it took two years to become a registered optometrist with a 2,000-hour curriculum and then successfully passing the State boards after a year of clinical practice. Tuition came in at a cool \$225.00 annually.



The YMCA located at 3763 S. Wabash. This is where the origins of Black History Month took root.

On June 9, 1934, a Bronzeville newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, ran an announcement about Mrs. Coleman's achievement accompanied by her photo, "Wife of John B. Coleman, well known Chicago druggist, who received her degree from the Northern Illinois College of Optometry on June 1. Mrs. Coleman is the first woman of the Race to be graduated from this college." At the time, Mrs. Coleman was a 40-year-old wife and mother to her young son, about to embark on her new career in optometry.

Sherman "Dilla" Thomas, a Chicago urban historian and owner of Chicago Mahogany Tours, sheds light on the role of the newspaper to the Black community, both in Chicago and around the nation, "The proximity to greatness was amazing in Bronzeville. Because 80% of Chicago's Black residents lived there, including the editors and reporters of *The Defender*, they covered everybody, from high society to local number runners visiting Paris. African Americans needed to see themselves and their stories served as inspiration across the country."

The newspaper played a crucial role in the Great Migration. While it was one of a few nationally distributed papers with a Black readership, including *The Chicago Bee*, also produced and printed in Bronzeville, *The Chicago Defender* published a string of ongoing articles urging and encouraging its Southern Black readers to move north to Chicago to secure a better life for themselves. The newspaper utilized a distribution system of Pullman porters, Black railroad attendants, who would leave bundles of the papers in beauty and barbershops across the American South, after smuggling them on various train routes out of Chicago.



The storied home of *The Chicago Defender*, the leading nationally distributed newspaper read by Black Americans. This building was located just down the street from the pharmacy owned by Dr. Coleman's husband where she practiced optometry the year after her graduation. This is located at 3435 S. Indiana Avenue.

After graduating, Dr. Coleman began her optometry practice in the Indiana Avenue location of her husband's pharmacy, just a few doors down from *The Chicago Defender's* offices. Dr. Coleman worked long enough to secure her practice hours, enabling her to sit for the Illinois board exam. Another notice in the paper was posted in May 1935 that declared Dr. Coleman, "the only Race woman registered optometrist in the United States," after she passed the exam with high marks.

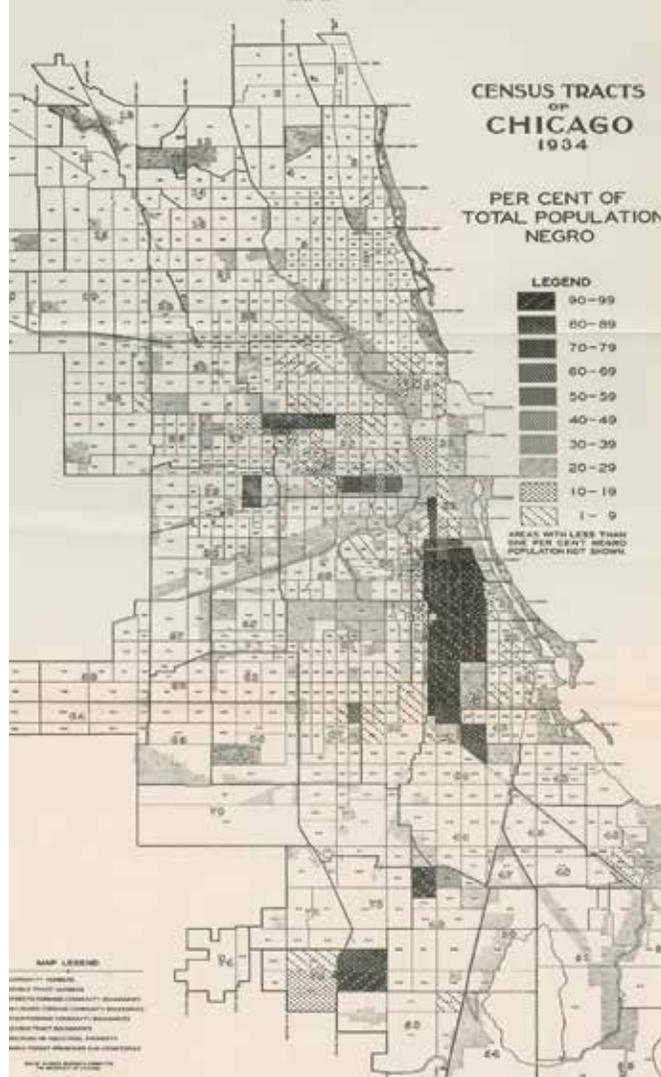
Soon after, the now Dr. Coleman and her young son left Bronzeville and returned to Kentucky, this time to Lexington. It is unclear exactly why Dr. Coleman made the move, but it could be attributed to a number of factors including John, Jr.'s asthma, the growing caregiving needs of her aging mother and father-in-law, or a combination of the lack of Black healthcare providers in the South because of Jim Crow laws. Chicago had a disproportionate number of Black optometrists in the mid-1930s, given the presence of two well regarded schools of optometry located there and in Lexington, Dr. Coleman was the sole Black optometrist practicing within the city limits.

Back in Bronzeville, *The Chicago Defender* continued to cover Dr. Coleman's professional life as an optometrist and her achievements in Lexington. Announcements in the newspaper ran about the opening of her private practice in the fall of 1938, a variety of lectures Dr. Coleman gave promoting her practice and the importance of children's vision care, and her 1941 retirement from optometry due to ill health.

Dr. Coleman would never practice optometry again. After a short stint in Arizona to take advantage of the arid climate for John, Jr.'s asthma, Dr. Coleman and her son settled in the historic Black section of Denver, Colorado known as the Whittier neighborhood. Mr. Coleman would join them in 1949 after selling his Bronzeville pharmacies.

Dr. Bess Coleman pioneered what it meant to be a Black woman professional in the field of optometry. She lived the path of the Great Migration, she encapsulated the shifting, but still limited opportunities available to Black Americans under Jim Crow, all while being a daughter, wife, mother, caregiver, and business owner, with all the inherent and mundane, often invisible, responsibilities associated with those roles.

In ICO's 'Seeing is Believing' video interview series produced in 2021, student and president of the Black Student Union, **Alexis Abernathy, OD '23** from St. Louis, Missouri was interviewed about being a Black optometry student, "When I first arrived [at ICO], I struggled heavily with imposter syndrome. I thought I did not



*The 1934 Census Tract of Chicago showing where African Americans were allowed to live. This tract of land was often referred to as the "Black Belt". Bronzeville, one of the most densely populated areas of the city, was referred to as the "Black Metropolis".*

belong here. I didn't have any Black mentors. There was a commercial online and it said, 'If you see her, you can be her.' That has been my motto since starting ICO. If you see someone who looks like you, it makes you feel like you belong in that space, too. My goal after leaving ICO is to become that for future students."

Bess Coleman, OD '34, belonged in the spaces she inhabited at optometry school and in Chicago and in Kentucky. She continues to inspire. Her story and legacy matter more than she could have understood walking into that Bronzeville classroom as the first Black woman optometry student. "If you see her, you can be her." We see you, Dr. Coleman.

*Grateful thanks to Kirsten Pourroy Herbert for her article about Dr. Coleman in [Hindsight: Journal of Optometry History](#), Volume 51, Number 2, April 2020. Kristen's article can be accessed online by searching Coleman's name and adding OD.*



## TRACY MATCHINSKI, OD '95, FAAO

- Endowed scholarship with the children of Al and Sarah Rosenbloom
- Area of focus: Education (Scholarship) and Service to the Community

Community can mean different things to different people. It can refer to the people you work or study around. It can refer to the people you live with and amongst. It can refer to people across the globe you feel a special kinship with through volunteering. Or it can mean all those things. For **Tracy Matchinski, OD '95**, it is the latter.

Dr. Matchinski's sense of community was influenced by her work and relationship with her mentor, **Alfred Rosenbloom, OD '48** and the first volunteer trip she made to Morocco at his request. That trip would go on to shape her career and her commitment to community.

"I had always had it in mind to create a scholarship when the time was right," says Dr. Matchinski. But how do you know when the time is right for something like making a financial commitment to support the students in your community? "What am I waiting for?" Dr. Matchinski asked herself, "If I can do it now, why not now?"

And so, she did.

In partnership with the Rosenbloom family, Dr. Matchinski has endowed the **Rosenbloom-Matchinski Scholarship** that will be awarded to two students annually, recognizing their community service endeavors. "The students are so energetic and so excited that I want to support them and the work they want to do. There was no reason to wait until I retire."



Given the commitment ICO has prioritized to the local community in honor of the sesquicentennial, Dr. Matchinski worked with the Development office to tailor a donation that honored her expanded idea of community. "I like what Development is doing with donations. It's not just writing a check, but they encourage you to find your passion and reflect that in a donation. ICO and optometry have been good to me. Optometry has been good to a lot of us. I wanted to find a way to weave this into my finances and it worked. We don't always know what we can do unless we see someone else do it. We all need to be kinder and give more. I hope it inspires students."

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"I like what Development is doing with donations ...

They encourage you to find your passion and reflect that in a donation."

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## SCOTT JENS, OD '91

- Monetary Donations
- Area of focus: Student Leadership Development (LGBTQ+ and URM)

**Scott Jens, OD '91**, had been in the field of optometry for almost thirty years and sat on the Board of Trustees, but had never donated to ICO. He is not unique in that regard. "Lots of doctors have positive feelings about ICO, but don't donate back," he noted. A recent series of events changed that for him.

"You get to a certain point and start reflecting on your career. The 150th anniversary was coming up and that was compelling. I wanted to do something with ICO and we decided as a family to donate."

When they donate, most donors want it to mean something and serve a larger purpose. Like many Americans, that purpose found Dr. Jens in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd and the social unrest that followed. "It was a watershed moment for a lot of people. I learned to open my ears and not my mouth," he said.

That purpose also aligns with ICO's commitment to serving the larger community through a renewed emphasis on nurturing a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus and within the exam rooms of the IEI, practicing culturally competent care for some of Chicago's most vulnerable residents.

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"It is important to us to support kids who face challenges. Optometry should look like America."

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To speak to someone about making a gift to ICO, please contact the **Development Office** at **312.949.7073** or **development@ico.edu**.

Working with the Development Office, Dr. Jens identified two initiatives that supported the commitment to community he was looking to serve. One was helping to fund a pilot program initiated by faculty member **Eric Harris, OD** that partners with Chicago Public Schools and city high schools to introduce Black and Brown teens to the field of optometry.

The other was in support of the LGBTQ+ students at ICO in their efforts to **create a physical space on campus** where they could gather and learn, a space that other groups on campus could also use to congregate and be in community with one another.

"I was not always as understanding as I could have been when I was younger and in school, but I have grown. It is important to us to support kids who face challenges. Optometry should look like America," said Dr. Jens, which is, indeed, a purpose worth supporting.



(L-R) Dr. Jens, Blake (29), Cheryl, Shay (25), and Bryn (20)

Interview with: Nora Matland

Q & A with



**Eric Harris, OD, FAAO**  
Assistant Professor of Optometry

**A**lthough **Eric Harris, OD** is one of our newest faculty members, in only a year, he has achieved quite a bit. One of the first initiatives he implemented was to develop a mentorship program for current seniors in high school. These students are high achievers, but come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Partnering with a local organization, he hopes to introduce students to the benefits of optometry and other healthcare professions. Now working with **Scott Jens, OD '91**, Dr. Harris has been able to fund this pilot program. We sat down to learn a bit more about his history, his views on mentorship and how he hopes to build the next generation of ODs.

**Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into optometry?**

I was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. I went to kindergarten, elementary, high school, undergrad, and optometry school within the same two miles. Optometry has been part of my life for a long time because I was born with strabismus. By the age of 13, I had already undergone seven strabismus surgeries. I knew I wanted to do something medical but didn't know that optometry was a possibility. Once I learned more about it though, I knew it was the right path for me.

**You're pretty new to ICO. We'd love to know, why were you excited to come to ICO?**

I was excited to come here because it was something different. Because of my background, I felt that I had a lot to offer clinically. I have worked in direct patient care for a long time. I look forward to being a strong resource for all students, but especially those interested in pursuing practice opportunities within hospitals and schools of medicine.

**What are some of the things you hope to achieve while you're at ICO? Where do you want to be in five years?**

Within the IEI, I'd like to be more involved with the urgent care clinic, and in particular, the Rosenbloom clinic. I'd especially like to work with the post-op patients who are referred to us after cataract surgery. I really enjoy those encounters.

Beyond the clinic, I see myself more involved in campus affairs and working with students and faculty from non-traditional backgrounds and with underrepresented minorities. There is so much work to be done to grow our optometric workforce so that it more closely resembles the real world.

To respond to this problem, I'm drafting a curriculum for an innovative pipeline program. The plan is to attract underrepresented minority students interested in pursuing a career in a health profession. That means optometry, but also dentistry, pharmacy and maybe even podiatry. These professions share the same student diversity issue. Of course, my goal is to have more optometrists who look like me, but I've realized that this may not be the right path for everyone. As they say, a rising tide lifts all boats, and I think an increased interest in health professions will help optometry as well.

We've already found an organization interested in partnering with us with over 200 students in their yearly cohort. Most of these students are first-generation college students and/or underrepresented minorities, but also very high performers. As seniors in high school, we will be engaging them at a crucial time. They can plan their undergraduate career around their future professional goals. Hopefully we can also get them involved with ICO by providing them with shadowing opportunities during the summer.

**We noticed that you're quite involved on social media. Can you tell us how you hope to use this medium and how you hope to inspire incoming students and in particular students of color?**

On Instagram, you can make a five-second video and within minutes you have messages from students across the country. It's phenomenal the speed that information travels on social media. I love that I can use it as an ancillary educational tool. My goal is to be as helpful as possible, and the feedback that I get from students really drives me to do more.

Institutions, optometrists, and other health care providers must harness social media as an important learning tool and not just entertainment. The art of mentoring is changing because of social media.

I'm just working on one little piece, but I know I am having an impact because of it.



# ICO VOICES

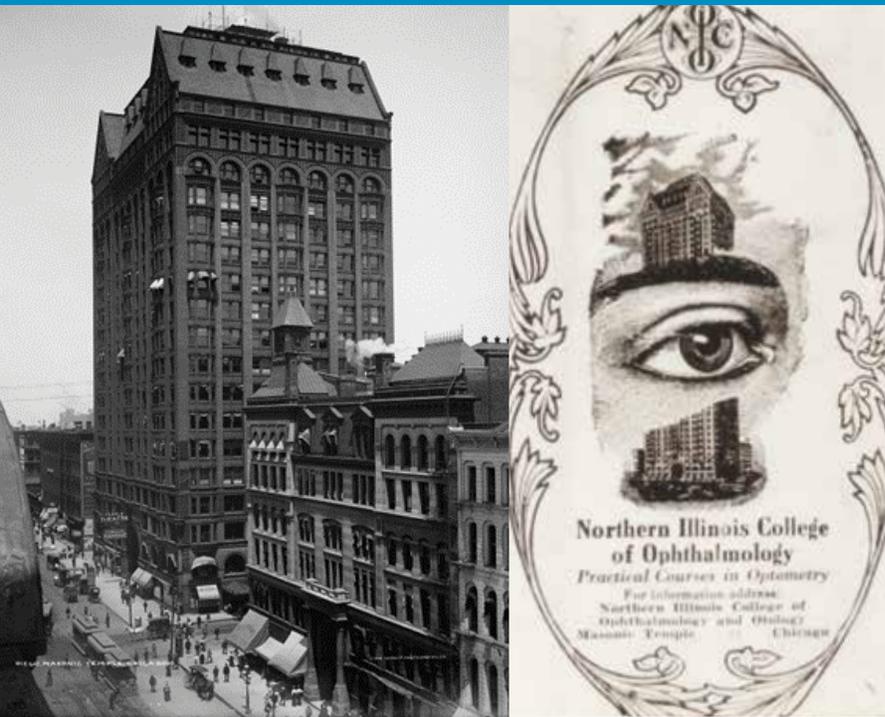
Over the past few years, we have collected students' perspectives and stories. We want to celebrate just how unique and diverse our student body is. As part of Asian Pacific American Heritage month, we have collected four more stories. Make sure to check out all stories on our YouTube page.

[youtube.com/ICOOptometry](https://youtube.com/ICOOptometry)

# IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

*Although 3241 S. Michigan Ave. has been our home for nearly 70 years, we were not always located here. As optometry advanced, ICO's needs and locations changed as well. What remains is the photographic evidence that the past leaves behind. Searching through the archives, we found addresses through the city that have been "home" to our optometry students.*

Captions by: Nora Matland



## 1922 ▾

As the optometric profession became more regulated, especially through legislations, the need for additional space became evident. In 1922, NICOO evolved into NICO (Northern Illinois College of Optometry) and moved to Drexel Blvd. & 41st Street. By 1930, after a 5000 sq ft expansion, the former silent-movie studio was now a 12,000-square-foot facility. They advertised it as "the world's most extensive plant for the exclusive teaching of optometry."



## 1891 ▲

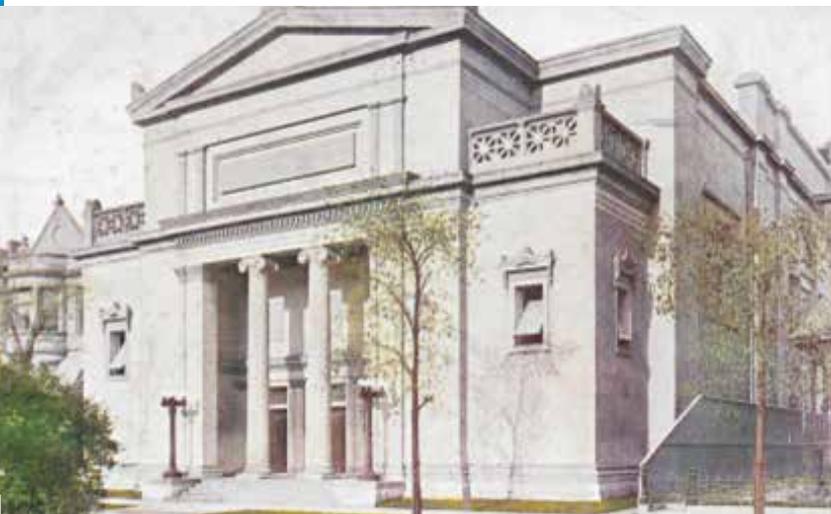
If you've ever walked past our timeline at ICO, you might have wondered what the picture of an eye and a building in the background meant. The building is the Masonic Temple Building, previously located on the corner of Randolph and State Street. In 1895 it became the tallest building in the city. While NICOO (Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology) was located there, NICOO's advertisements prominently displayed the building. This way prospective students would associate the towering skyscraper with the prominence of both the school and the rising profession of optometry.

◀ 1936

Before there was a Brady Hall or an RC, there was the Bernhard Hotel. And before that, there was no dormitory at all. Instead, many students would stay at nearby hotels like the Hyde Park YMCA. When the Bernhard Hotel was purchased in 1936, all non-resident students moved into the hotel.

1936 ▶

In 1936, the Midwestern College of Optometry was established. A year later, it was renamed the Monroe College of Optometry. MCO moved to a building which had once been a poultry market. As one administrator recalled, "They say you could still smell the . . . chickens down on the ground floor."



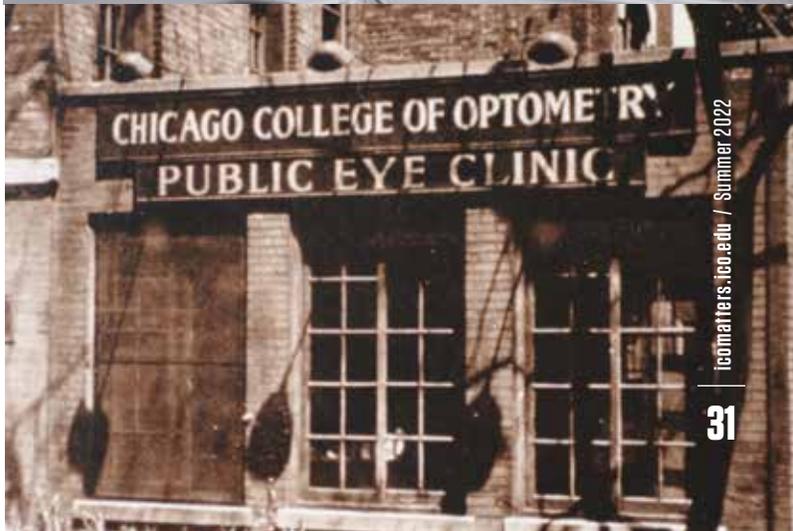
MID 1940s ▲

When the GI Bill passed, enrollment in both ICO and NICO exploded. For NICO, that meant expanding beyond the silent-movie studio and onto a six-building campus. In August 1947, the First Church of Christ Scientist building was bought for assemblies, lectures, and graduation ceremonies. Upper and lower stories of buildings nearby were also incorporated.



MID 1940s ▶

Our photo archive grows much larger after the mid-1940s. This is probably because photographs became more common, but also because there was a huge increase in the student population. Finally, MCO could much more effectively compete against NICO. For MCO, now renamed CCO (Chicago College of Optometry), this meant scaling up quickly. Since its founding, CCO had struggled to attract enough students. Now, suddenly, they were in a vastly different situation. To meet the new needs of students, 5 nineteenth-century brick-and-stone buildings were purchased which also included a clinic at the corner of Clark and Belden.



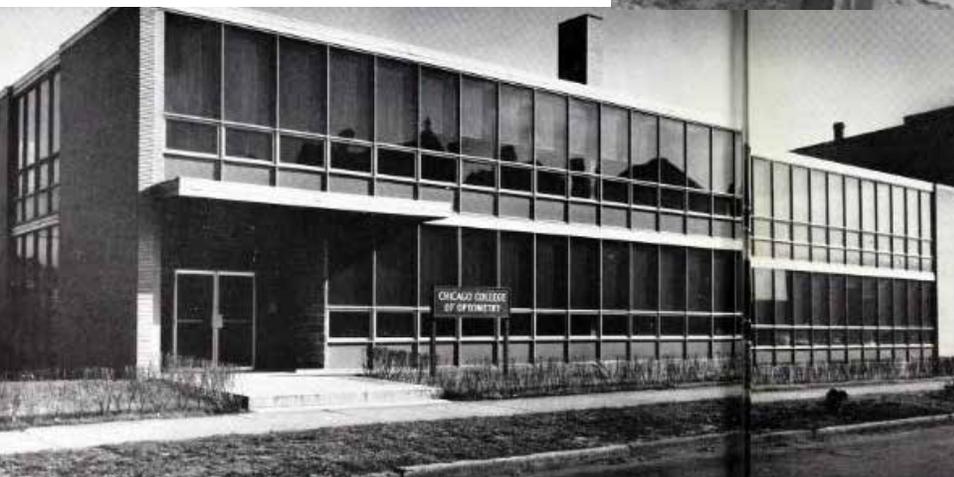


## A New Home for ICO

By 1954, student enrollment at CCO had dropped from 480 in 1947 to 94. Both NICO and CCO were looking to relocate, and with the construction of IIT's campus, there was a lot of interest in affiliating and building near the newly developed campus. With the help of IIT's board chairman, CCO purchased a parcel of land on S. Michigan Avenue.

### 1954 ▶

Groundbreaking at CCO's new campus took place on January 29. By the fall, the new structure, modeled after Mies van der Rohe's modernist IIT campus, was ready to accept students. The weekend before classes started, a summer downpour flooded the school's brand-new auditorium. The ICO family (then the CCO family) banded together to bail out water. That Monday, the fall session began on schedule.



### June 9, 1955 ◀

With enrollment continuing to decrease, the two large optometric schools agreed to merge and to close their separate doors. The next day, June 10, 1955, Illinois College of Optometry opened. The new CCO building became ICO's home while the N. Clark Street clinic served as the ICO Eye Clinic.



# Growing Facilities for a Growing Student Population

*No building at ICO seems quite so iconic as the "Brady Hilton." Brady Hall was a place of community, hours of studying, and probably more than a few last-day-of-finals parties. At the same time, the clinic was being built. Today, the proximity of the clinic is one of the reasons students choose ICO.*



## May 1964 ▲

Brady Hall was built to end ICO's heavy reliance on IIT's campus. Since ICO was first built, housing, library, and cafeteria services were all provided by IIT. As both ICO and IIT's student enrollments increased, this became unsustainable. In May 1964, the ground was broken for Brady Hall. Named after **John J. Brady**, a former chairman of ICO, it was built as a 3-story dormitory to house 170 unmarried male students. As the female student population began to grow, the dorm became co-ed.



## 1968 ▲

If you've ever walked around the IEI, you might have noticed a corner stone dedicated to the "Eye Clinic" from 1968. As soon as Brady Hall was dedicated, ground was broken for a clinic wing. At that same time, the Department of Streets and Sanitation was planning its own expansion of Michigan Avenue into a 5-lane parkway. As **Dr. Eugene Strawn**, then president of ICO, pointed out, that would have meant "Michigan Avenue would run down the center of our main hallway in our College building." Luckily, after a year of negotiating with the City, the need to liquidate all of ICO's holdings and to move to the suburbs was solved. The City and ICO reached an agreement.



## A Flagship Institution

As it stands today, ICO has gone through many changes. The infrastructure that we see today was mainly built in the 80s. The library, courtyard, and the IEI were all a part of a 50,000 square foot expansion that was finalized in 1985. Throughout ICO's many years, optometry has advanced, and ICO has remained at the forefront of the latest technology because of the support of our alumni.

Alumni have played a key role in advancing the institution. In every instance, ICO would not be what it is today without the support of alumni. These leaders had the foresight and courage to build ICO into the force that it is today.

As we celebrate our 150th year, we honor those who made the profession what it is today, and we look forward to what the profession will become. We renew our commitment to remain at the forefront of teaching, training, discovery, and healthcare delivery, and we reflect on the importance of our alumni.

Alumni will continue to lead and stimulate innovation at ICO. Together, we can help this institution lead the way for the next 150 years.

# Class Notes

## 1970s

### 1977

**Robin Rinearson** opened Jake's Ice Cream, named after Rinearson's 29-year-old nephew who has cerebral palsy, in August 2021.

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## 1980s

### 1984

**Julie A. Schornack** has been named President of Marshal B Ketchum University. Dr. Schornack received her optometry degree from ICO in 1984. She then completed a Masters of Education at Pacific University College of Optometry. She has been at MBKU since 1986. She began her career at MBKU serving in the Cornea and Contact Lens Service and teaching in the classroom, laboratory and clinic. She went on to take responsibility for the clinical education program, which oversaw both clinical externship and residency programs. Dr. Schornack also served as the Vice President of Clinical Affairs, which provided key leadership to the clinical programs for SCCO. Her current role supports the operations of the university as Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff. Dr. Schornack is well known to the MBKU community, having served for over 30 years in these various roles.

**Kerry Gelb** is featured in the groundbreaking film *Open Your Eyes*, now available on Amazon Prime and AppleTV!

### 1985

**Neil Margolis** was featured on the cover of the Spring/Summer 2022 issue of *Chicago Health Magazine* for his contribution to the article "Drifting Away". The article covers children who may dislike reading and the possibility of vision complications that can cause this aversion to reading as well as how to address these concerns.

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## 2000s

### 2005

**Joshua C. Baker** was promoted to Senior Vice President and Chief Academic Officer at Midwestern University Arizona College of Optometry.

Dr. Baker received his bachelor's degree from Ithaca College in 1999, earned a Master of Science in Secondary Science Education from Syracuse University in 2001, and graduated Magna cum Laude from the Illinois College of Optometry in 2005. His post-doctoral residency was in primary eye care at Northeastern State University College of Optometry at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. He has previously served Midwestern University as the Assistant Dean, Assistant Dean of Clinical Affairs, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Arizona College of Optometry as well as the Acting Dean of the Chicago College of Optometry.

### 2006

**Anney (Kunthara) Joseph** contributed "Comprehensive eye telehealth" to *Ocular Telehealth A Practical Guide* and "Letting go of cognitive error:

when presumed glaucoma isn't glaucoma: a teaching case report" in the *Journal of Optometric Education* in 2022.

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## 2010s

### 2012

**Barton Higley** opened a new practice location in Keene, NH in May.

When Dr. Higley began practicing, he made it his goal to truly connect with his patients so that he could empathize with them." As I learn more about my patients' lives—who they are and what they do—I am able to address their eye care challenges with more care and precision, which helps improve their quality of life. That's what eye care is really all about!"

Dr. Higley resides in Dublin, NH with his wife and daughters. During his free time, he enjoys being with his family, training for triathlons, playing tennis, kayaking, and playing the guitar.

### 2016

**Richard Miller** opened a cold start practice, KITSU Eye Care in Annapolis, MD. in March 2022.

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## Got alumni news? Please share.

**ONLINE:**  
[icomatters.ico.edu/submit-a-class-note](http://icomatters.ico.edu/submit-a-class-note)

**CONTACT**  
Alumni Development  
[alumni@ico.edu](mailto:alumni@ico.edu)

# In Memoriam

## 1940s

### 1949

**Lloyd Allen** (NICO), February 2, Manitowoc, WI. Lloyd enlisted in the Army Air Corps on July 6, 1942. After basic training, he was sent to his base in Kimbolton, England.

After the War, Lloyd followed in his father's footsteps and became a Doctor of Optometry. He attended the Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago. He opened his practice in Kewaunee, WI.

## 1950s

### 1950

**Alan H Stone** (NICO), April 28, Seattle, WA. Alan attended the University of Illinois, and graduated with a degree of Doctor of Optometry from Northern Illinois College of Optometry.

In late 1951 he was drafted into the army and trained at Fort Breckenridge, Kentucky.

Alan had a deep commitment to the community where he lived. He was an active member of Lions International. He served on the board of Northwest Lions Foundation for Sight and Hearing, Red Cross and Congregation Beth Israel in Bellingham. He was a member of Optometric Physicians of Washington, American Optometric Association, SightLife and was honored several times for his work.

### 1955

**Laurence S. Chadwick**, February 17, Galesburg, IL. Larry sat on the board of several organizations and served as President for many of them. He was an active member of the Salvation Army, the First United Methodist Church, Kiwanis Club, Galesburg Jaycees, Toastmasters, Soangetaha Country Club, Illinois Optometric Association, and the American Optometric Association.

### 1958

**Paul Langehough**, February 17, Iowa City, IA. Paul attended the University of Iowa and was a graduate of the Illinois College of Optometry. Paul served in the U.S. Army from 1953 to 1955. On June 12, 1957 Paul married Ruth Guenther in Eldora, Iowa. They moved to Iowa City in 1958 where Paul joined the optometric practice of Drs. James and Philip Hottel. He became a partner and the practice grew into Eye Associates of Iowa City, where he practiced for nearly 40 years.

## 1980s

### 1984

**Steven Spencer**, January 30, Yuma, AZ.

### 1986

**Thomas Wennerberg**, January 12, 2021, LaGrange, IL. Thomas was a beloved optometrist to many clients in the La Grange, Illinois area and was known for his awards designated by the Chicago Cornea Consultants and was an Optometric Clinical Affiliate. He was a lover of the arts, especially the Theatre of Western Springs where he was actively involved. Dr. Wennerberg was a friend to all and could find a friend in any city he travelled to. He was especially fond of his friends in Rhinelander, Wisconsin and considered them to be his second family.

### 1987

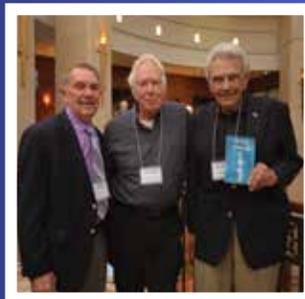
**Andrea Stein**, March 2, 2022, Skokie, IL. Dr. Andrea J. Stein, a native of Chicago, began her studies at Drake University where she was granted early admission into the Illinois College of Optometry (ICO). At ICO, she obtained two degrees: a Bachelor's of Science in Visual Science as well as her Doctor of Optometry. Dr. Stein started her career in the Navy where she served for 8 years; 2 ½ years were in Naples, Italy. Upon her return, she practiced Optometry in a multi-disciplinary setting for 10 years. Dr. Stein opened her own Optometry practice, Eye See Ravenswood.



# Alumni, thank you for everything!

There is no way ICO would be the institution it is today without the support of our alumni. We are always grateful for our alumni, but especially upon writing this special anniversary edition, it has become clear to us that they have played an essential role in advancing our profession and our institution. Without our alumni, ICO would not exist. So, we wanted to take a moment to thank you again for all that you do for us and for our profession.

With your support, we know these next 150 years will be just as great as these past 150.



## 1872-2022 • [ico.edu/history](http://ico.edu/history)

1872 - Chicago College of Ophthalmology and Otology • 1891 - Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology and Otology (NICOO)  
1907 - Needles Institute of Optometry (NIO) • 1926 - Northern Illinois College of Optometry (NICO)  
1936 - Midwestern College of Optometry • 1937 - Monroe College of Optometry (MCO) • 1947 - Chicago College of Optometry (CCO)  
1955 - NICO and CCO merge to form the Illinois College of Optometry (ICO)



# Datebook

**NOTE:** This calendar is subject to change based on the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

**HOMECOMING  
RETURNS!  
SEPT 9 - 11**

## SEPTEMBER

**September 3**  
Labor Day Holiday

**September 9-11**  
ICO Homecoming

**September 29 - OCT 2**  
IOA Annual Meeting  
Springfield, IL

## OCTOBER

**October 22 - Nov 5**  
Fall Quarter Final Exams

**October 26 - 29**  
AAO Annual Meeting  
San Diego, CA

## NOVEMBER

**November 12-13**  
Continuing Education Program  
12 hours of CE

**November 14**  
First Day of Winter Quarter

**November 25-28**  
Thanksgiving Break

## AUGUST

**August 2**  
NBEO Part 1 Exam

**August 8**  
Break Week

**August 11-14**  
Class of 2026 Orientation

**August 15**  
First Day of Fall Quarter

**August 20**  
ICO Olympics

**August 27**  
President's Welcome and  
White Coat Ceremony

## JULY

**July 8-10**  
NOA Annual Convention  
Anaheim, CA

**July 11-15**  
Focus on Your Future Program

**July 30-August 6**  
Summer Quarter Final Exams





**Illinois College of Optometry**

3241 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60616

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**www.ico.edu**

## Last Look



*Students from the Chicago College of Optometry perform a conga line at one of their dances in 1954.*