



ICO MATTERS

WINTER 2023 • V22 ISSUE 2

Technology Summit 2023

+

History of Blind Spot
Homecoming 2023

MAGAZINE OF THE ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

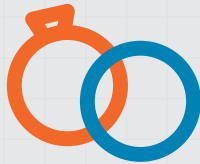
CLASS OF 2027

ADMISSIONS

ICO's Class of 2027 has **127** enrolled students.
There were **686** applicants with **352** students interviewed.

PERSONAL STATISTICS

The entering class is **72%** female and **28%** male. The mean age is **23** and **6%** of the class is married.

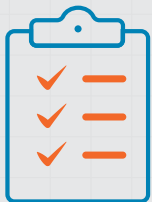


UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS



60% Biological Sciences, **13%** Health Sciences, **8%** Chemistry, **6%** Psychology, and **4%** other

TESTING



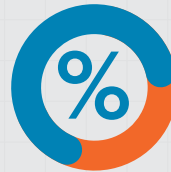
The mean GPA for the Class of 2027 is **3.51**.
The mean OAT test score is **318**.

Cumulative	3.70 ≥	32%
GPA	3.50 - 3.69	22%
Distribution	3.20 - 3.49	26%
	3.00 - 3.19	13%
	≤ 2.99	6%

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



United States, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cuba, Guatemala, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Pakistan, Poland, Ukraine, US Minor Outlying Island, and Yemen



ETHNICITY

Caucasian - **42%**
Asian/Asian American - **42%**
Multiracial - **8%**
Hispanic - **2%**
Black/African American - **6%**



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A Navy Pier celebration.

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ICO's first ever technology summit.

On the cover: Cover generated by Leonardo.ai and Photoshop AI.

ICO MATTERS

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EDITORIAL

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IBC Datebook

Talking Heads

"How will Technology and AI change optometry? "

Mark K. Colip, OD '92

President

"Technological advances in healthcare will continue to enable optometrists to provide even better care for our patients in the future. Instrumentation will continue to advance both our diagnostic and treatment capabilities to benefit our patients. The use of telemedicine advanced rapidly during the COVID pandemic, largely by necessity. ICO has been a leader in developing the safest protocols and guidelines for when such technologies should and should not be used. ICO has also been involved in advancing the training of remote technicians so they can assist optometrists by providing the most reliable data from the remote instrumentation. We took this leadership role because it is apparent this technology is advancing and becoming a tool for optometrists to utilize when applied appropriately. We want our ICO students to be at the leading edge of understanding and gaining experience with this technology.

Diagnostic tools are currently being developed that can predict the likelihood of systemic disease progression well before they are visible to us. We are doing some of the



earliest work on these developments via research protocols currently underway. The amount of data that can be quickly and effectively analyzed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) is astounding. Our students and faculty were able to interact with a few of these tools in November, during ICO's first Technology Summit, which included a presentation on generative transformers, telehealth and the power of AI. These tools will advance how we practice optometry, and we will continue to integrate them into our curriculum as they develop. During ICO's November CE Program, some of these new technologies were presented.

If you'd like to learn more about telehealth, check out our research highlight on page 32 and to learn more about the Tech Summit, flip to page 26. We will need to proceed with care as we take on these new tools, but when used correctly, we can continue to improve healthcare. "

Ali Tafreshi

President

Topcon Healthcare
Innovation Center

"I think optometry is at the forefront of healthcare, not just eye care. I believe that the eye can transform health care. It's a window into the body and is often a harbinger of other health issues. There are a lot of changes that can be detected earlier in the eye than anywhere else. The OCT scan optometrists perform is already collecting high-resolution volumetric pieces of information. We are ready to make this information even more valuable. Currently, we are working on developing models that will ensure that diseases are caught through an eye scan. Today, with technology, we can measure those changes even before they can be seen. These models will be able to predict systemic cardiovascular and neurological diseases through an eye exam alone.



Optometrists hold the key to changing healthcare because in many cases, patients will see them earlier and more frequently than most other healthcare providers. So much can be predicted just through one eye exam. I believe that power is transformative.

Because the eye is a direct extension of the brain and the circulation is part of the body's cardiovascular system, it can be monitored with micron-level precision and at a resolution that is unprecedented. AI can then effectively take all that volumetric data and analyze it quickly and intelligently and connect it to other clinical data in the EHR to predict diseases.

As a result, AI will enable optometrists to provide faster, better, more consistent care to patients. This type of care will in turn make them more effective clinicians and give them a significant advantage over those who are not willing to accept this technology. We want to make sure at the same time, that optometrists understand the technology they are working with.

As a technology company, our goal is to make sure that we develop these solutions in a very responsible way. That means putting guardrails around how we deliver the technology and who we deliver it to. We do this not just because the FDA requires it but also because we need to ensure that the clinical science is verified and validated properly. Because we are working with machine learning, the models drift over time and these drifts must be addressed effectively and in a timely manner at specific sites. Our technology must be carefully evaluated on site. It must be a partnership between us and the optometrists.

To effectively implement this technology, optometrists must have an understanding of how these AI models are helping them make decisions. If the model is changing or drifting, they need to understand why that's happening. They need to ask; is the patient population changing, or perhaps the images are not good quality, or perhaps there was a change in the software. This needs to be a back-and-forth conversation in order to ensure quality technology.

I believe we must empower optometrists. If we can intelligently analyze and connect the information they collect, optometry becomes essential to all health care."



Michael Chaglasian, OD, FAAO
Chief of Staff

"In many ways, we're still in the early days of AI and optometry. There is so much tremendous work being done by several key companies that will have a positive impact on optometry.

I find there's some confusion on the role of AI in health care and how AI will affect our role as caregivers. Using AI might not be too different than being given a report from a diagnostic OCT-imaging instrument that didn't exist 20 years ago. When OCTs emerged into eyecare, they revolutionized traditional exam techniques and optometrists had to learn how to use the information appropriately. Granted, future AI information will be much more impactful and possibly misleading, depending upon the specific development. Currently, I have too much information to thoroughly analyze my patients, I don't have enough time, and I don't even have enough expertise, and I'm a recognized expert in at least one area of optometry. Thus, I believe that clinicians need an appropriately constructed AI tool to guide them in their patient care.

The need for optometrists and AI is more likely to change how we provide patient care and not necessarily eliminate jobs (except those that are mundane and repetitive). The bigger question is will we be able to effectively meet the growing demand in eyecare and healthcare? AI can be part of the solution to this problem.

Optometrists need to position themselves today to be prepared for a paradigm shift in patient care delivery. With AI, optometrists will be able to deliver more efficient and more accurate health care decisions for their patients. This is the direction that the rest of medicine is moving towards, and optometry is and should be a part of medicine. I believe AI will help our patients and our careers in the long run.

"The need for optometrists and AI is more likely to change how we provide patient care and not necessarily eliminate jobs"

Michael Chaglasian, OD, FAAO

To ensure that we can use this tool effectively, there must be oversight. As these tools are being developed, the FDA is actively involved. From what I've seen in AI and some of the books that I've read, these tools are being developed very thoughtfully, very carefully, and slowly. The transition won't be overnight, and it should not be without validation and a lot of thought by appropriate leaders in this area. But optometrists should embrace this changing health care.

I believe the physician will always be in charge. The optometrist, as is the case now, is going to have to analyze data provided by a new source called AI or machine learning or deep learning or all of the above. I don't think of AI as this big, ugly animal that's going to take over the world, but instead as a tool that accurately and thoroughly analyzes key health indicators to generate important health insights. I would love to rely on an AI-generated piece of information that I can consider, and use (or not use). We should just as importantly train our students and our optometrists to use AI information appropriately. That education must go hand in hand with these advances. I'm excited for these new insights, not scared."

ICO HAPPENINGS

It's hard to believe we're already into Winter quarter! This past August, we welcomed our new class that is 127 strong and our residents are nearly halfway through their yearlong practicum. Here's a few things that have been happening around campus.

Welcome, Class of 2027

This year, we welcomed our largest class in five years. They've taken part in ICOlympics and have gotten through their first quarter as full-time optometry students. This quarter, they'll start their first clinic rounds and take on Ocular Anatomy. The winter quarter is off to a great start!



Orientation team members are ready for move-in day.

Class of 2027 students participate in orientation events.



ICO students enjoying ICOlympics.



Welcome, New Residents

Another round of residents has arrived at ICO! Many of our residents are returning faces, but we also have new residents from many institutions. On Fridays, they meet for grand rounds to discuss interesting cases from clinic. There's always lots to uncover with our residents, and together, they're deepening their understanding of the field. Make sure to check out their Instagram @ico_residents to see how they've spent the first half of this formative year.



Follow the residents on Instagram.



IEI residents show off their team building skills.

SVOSH Peru 2023

Twelve ICO SVOSH students joined **William Olivos, OD '95** and **Tracy Matchinski, OD '95** on a clinic trip to Cusco, Peru. The VOSH/ International, VOSH Illinois, Olive Tree Foundation, and Rotary clubs of Port St. Lucia, Florida and Cuzco, Peru partnered to provide eyecare and glasses to 1,300 people in August 2023. The US team was joined by local optometrists and optometry students from Universidad Peruana Los Andes as well as local ophthalmologists at Cepre Clinic in San Sebastian who helped manage ocular health referrals.



RESEARCH UPDATES

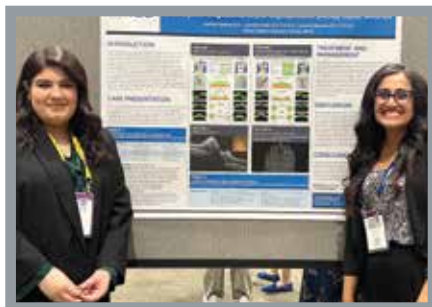
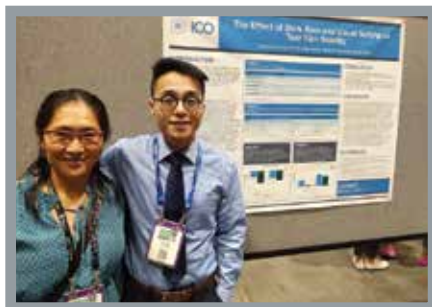
With every aspect of research growing at ICO, it's no surprise that we continue our strong presence not only at Academy, but at many other optometric conferences. The groundbreaking of the Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center brings us one step closer to implementing even more research projects.

ICO at Academy

Once again, ICO had a strong showing at AAO New Orleans. ICO faculty, residents and students presented 40 research posters at the conference. We are especially proud of **Jennifer Harthan, OD '06** who achieved Diplomat Status in the Cornea, Contact Lenses, and Refractive Technologies section! As a diplomate of this section, Dr. Harthan has now been officially recognized by the American Academy of Optometry for her comprehensive knowledge and expertise – joining the less than 1% of optometrists to receive this status and to be acknowledged as a pioneer in their field!



Jennifer Harthan, OD '06

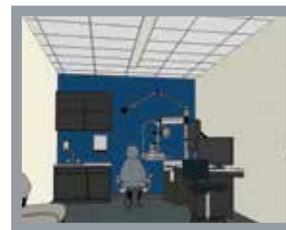


L-R: Yi Pang, OD and Zhiming (Jimmy) Tu '25; Amina Cheema '24 and Jaymeni Patel, OD '16; Lindsay Sicks, OD '10 and Ria Patel '25

Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center Groundbreaking

On July 20, our researchers took their eyes off their screens for a few hours to tear down some walls. The Dr. Newton K. Wesley Research Center will triple the amount of space ICO has dedicated to research. The Center will house specialty research rooms and a modular center area that can change based on research needs. Construction has been underway all quarter.

We can't wait to see this new space come to life and look forward to welcoming our research patients to this new space!



L-R: Dan Roberts, OD, PhD and Yi Pang, OD, PhD

Focus on Your Future

This year, we welcomed our sixteenth group of Focus on Your Future students to ICO. Students learned important admissions tips and took a deep dive into the field of optometry. They took part in clinic observations, an ophthalmic optics lab, and even got to see a bit of Chicago. It's always a delight to bring these students to campus and we're happy we were able to welcome such a strong cohort this year.



Teisha Johnson, MS, Senior Director of Admissions, with this year's Focus on Your Future participants.



L-R: Heather McLeod, OD '06; Eric Harris, OD; and Denise Skiadopoulos, OD '11, guiding FOYF students through diagnostic testing.

Vision Screenings in Chicago

We wanted to take a moment to acknowledge Iman Moore and our colleagues at the IEI for all their amazing outreach initiatives. These events are almost always held on Saturdays. Students and IEI staff are giving up some of their weekend to raise awareness about eye health and the IEI.

Here are the events we've participated in just since the last ICO Matters was published: May: Englewood Empowerment

Expo, Spring into Wellness; June: Near North Men's Health Fair; July: LoveFest Health Fest; August: Representation Matters Healthcare Career Fair, Shine Bright Back to School Bash, Latino Family Health Wellness & Health Equity Fiesta Tour 2023 and in October: Blue Cross Blue Shield Vision Screenings in the Little Village. Thank you to Iman and everyone from the IEI who takes part in these events. You make our presence in the community so much stronger!



L-R: Iman Moore, Tahira Bedgood, MS and Martha Acosta at the Representation Matters Healthcare Career Fair.



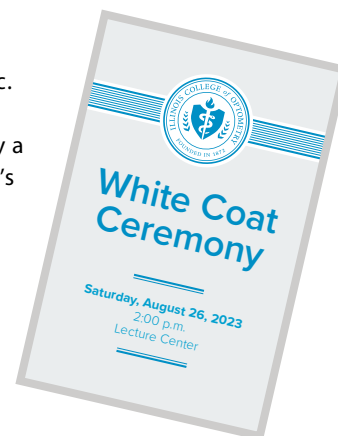
ICO staff and students at the Spring into Wellness Fair.

White Coat 2023

Another year, another White Coat Ceremony, another class officially starting their time in clinic. This year, we had a number of parents coating their children, an older brother coating his younger brother and one very proud president coating his daughter. As always, it was not only a celebration of how far these students have come, but also a day to recognize the Class of 2026's commitment to one another.

"It's a lot more special getting it second year . . . just because we are [seeing patients on our own] in clinic. . . I had that goal of being here, being able to help patients and it's happening right now," said **Nancy Garay '26**. "I love [having this ceremony] now as a second year. . . All the classes we went through, all the late nights of studying, it feels a lot more rewarding this way," said **Elizabeth Chen '26**.

With one year under their belt, this class knows that the faculty and our staff will adeptly guide them through the next few years. "I truly believe we're at the best place in the country. We've got the best faculty. It's just an honor to put on this white coat, and to be a part of that," said **Dylan Kruger '26**. These next few years will be a challenge, but we know that this class will make it through together, and we look forward to being part of that journey.



Dr. Colip welcomes the Class of 2026 into 2nd year.



ICO students take the optometric oath.



Video

Check out this year's lookback video on ICO's YouTube channel.



Photos

Download photos on ICO's Flickr page.



A special thanks to the following alumni and mentors who coated these students at the 2023 White Coat Ceremony!

1. **Philip Wong '26** coated by his brother **Alex Wong, OD '23**.
2. **Ludwig Alexander Kuhar '26** coated by his father **Ludwig Chad Kuhar, OD '97**.
3. **Marisa Kim '26** coated by her father **Charles Kim, OD** and mother **Susan Kim, OD**.
4. **Jessica Colip '26** coated by her father **Mark Colip, OD '92**.
5. **Mikayla Kemp '26** coated by her aunt **Mary Vadas, OD**.
6. **Sarah Bittle '26** coated by her mentor **Krystina Eubanks, OD '12**.
7. **Sana Akhtar '26** coated by her aunt **Atka Ghafoor, OD '17**.
8. **Yuki Chan '26** coated by her mentor **Janice Jurkus, OD '74**.
9. **Elizabeth Chen '26** coated by her mother **Bonnie Chen, OD**.

Celebrating the past and future of ICO

HOMECOMING 2023

Sable Hotel

Our campus events are back in full swing! This year we welcomed back the classes of 1948, 1953, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2018. This year's alumni were especially lucky with a beautiful September weekend and an impressive sunset from the brand new Sable Hotel on Saturday.

On Friday, we held a student/alumni mix-and-mingle. As always, the ICO community came out in full force, current and past students connected over cupcakes and specialty popcorn. Later that night, our annual raffle added an extra layer of fun. It's always wonderful to see how eager the ICO community is to continue strengthening our profession through even simple conversations.

Saturday brought more festivities, starting with a special lunch honoring alumni who graduated 50 years ago.

The main event took place at the Sable on Navy Pier, where eight alumni were recognized during the Alumni Association Awards Ceremony. The celebration continued with a class reunion dinner and quite the dance off by the end of the night.

Chicago welcomed them back with open arms. The weekend coincided with Taste of Chicago, and showcased all that Chicago has to offer. We're sure more than a few alumni reconnected with some of their old haunts and fell a little more in love with this wonderful city.

We hope that this year's reception not only helped you reconnect with ICO but also one another. Alumni do so much for this institution so we're always happy to welcome them back. Thanks so much to our alumni for being such a wonderful crowd!

FRIDAY NIGHT MIX AND MINGLE



CROUCH ALUMNI HALL DEDICATION

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE TOUR

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARDS

50-YR CLUB

CLASS REUNIONS

Thank You to Our
Homecoming Sponsors

EssilorLuxottica
National Vision
Specsavers
Eyecare Partners
VSP Vision
Alcon

WINTER DINNER

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MINGLE

EDUCATION:

SATURDAY 50-YEAR CLUB LUNCH



ICO inducted four new members to the prestigious 50-Year Club;
(L-R) **David Rhoads, OD '73, Dennis DeLee, OD '73, Steven Levin, OD '73, and Don Sipola, OD '73.**

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARDS CEREMONY & AWARD RECIPIENTS



Joseph Herba, OD '88

ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Joseph Herba, OD '88, currently practices in Crystal Lake, IL. He has been an active provider for his community's lions club. He has proven to be a significant Alumni Ambassador for the College. Mentoring and inspiring prospective students is vital to ICO's future. Dr. Herba has mentored over 80 students helping them find their way into optometry. Most have attended ICO and some have even practiced with him.



Amanda Gerson, OD '19

YOUNG ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

After working as an associate at a private practice, operating a sublease and working at a commercial office, **Amanda Gerson, OD '19** partnered with fellow colleague, **Matthew Jones, OD '08**, to open her own practice in March of 2023. She is active in both her community and within her profession. Dr. Gerson has served as president for both the Southwestern Illinois and Midstate optometric societies. She has served on numerous committees within the IOA and is currently chair of both the membership and corporate OD committees and was recently selected to serve as a key person regional captain. In 2022, Dr. Gerson was selected as the IOA's Young Optometrist of the year.



Congressman
Bobby Rush

DISTINGUISHED FRIEND AWARD

Congressman **Bobby Rush**, a legendary figure in modern African American politics, exhibited extraordinary leadership long before his 1992 election to Illinois' First Congressional District.

Rush made history when he formed the IL Chapter of the Black Panther Party. During this time, he formed the Free Medical Clinic in Chicago. He served as Alderman of the 2nd Ward from 1983-1992, until his election to the US House of Representatives.

Congressman Rush has been honored for his important efforts to advocate for enhancing and preserving quality eye care in the US, including assisting both optometry & ICO with legislative issues and funding. Rush was honored with the AOA Legislator Award in 2019, presented by Dr. Colip.



Dr. Roy Wesley and the
Newton K. Wesley
Foundation

DISTINGUISHED FRIEND AWARD

Dr. Roy Wesley, an optometrist, PhD research scientist, and author, grew up working in the emerging contact lens industry of the 1950s in his father's business, The Plastic Contact Lens Company, later Wesley Jessen (WJ), in Chicago. Roy received his Doctor of Optometry degree from New England College of Optometry, PhD from CUNY and then joined Wesley Jessen in the WJ Contact Lens Clinic. After the sale of WJ, he became president of the National Eye Research Foundation. He is the author of *Invisible Vision*, a memorial testament to his father's contributions to the development of the modern day contact lens.



Most recently the Newton K. Wesley Foundation provided the lead gift funding for the Dr. Newton K. Wesley Clinical Research Center which will serve as a dedicated research space that will greatly expand our growing clinical research capabilities.



John Baker, OD

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARD

John Baker, OD is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Binghamton University where he earned a BS degree in chemistry and earned his OD degree from Pennsylvania College of Optometry, where he was recognized for excellence in patient care. After graduation, he completed a residency in Primary Care/Ocular Disease at The Eye Institute of Pennsylvania College of Optometry before joining the faculty of the Illinois College of Optometry in the fall, 1985. He later completed a MEd degree in Curriculum and Supervision from Northern Illinois University.

During his time at ICO, he has served in a variety of teaching and administrative positions, most recently as the coordinator of the Clinical Methods and Procedures I course and the Clinical Assistant Program as well as Associate Dean for Education. In addition to his roles at the College, Dr. Baker is a senior consultant with the Accreditation Council of Optometric Education (ACOE) and a remote examiner for the National Board examination, Part III.



Jeffery Lewis, OD '12

HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Jeffery Lewis, OD '12. After graduation, he joined the All About Eyes team in Champaign, Illinois and in 2020 had the privilege to accept a new role as the Director of School Engagement for Keplr Vision. He serves as the East Central Society president for the Illinois Optometric Association and recently accepted a position on the American Optometric Association Contact Lens & Cornea Section Council. Dr. Lewis is a keynote speaker and Academic Consulting Expert for Bausch & Lomb.



Linda Rouse, OD '92

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Linda S. Rouse, OD '92, M.B.A., FAAO, Dean of Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry, earned her undergraduate degree in 1988 from Stetson University, and her Doctor of Optometry at Illinois College of Optometry in 1992. A one-year residency in primary eye care and ocular disease with a fellowship in clinical education was completed at the Illinois College of Optometry/Illinois Eye Institute in 1993. A master's degree in business and administration with a concentration in finance was attained in 2016 from Nova Southeastern University (NSU). Dr. Rouse began and continues to co-own a private optometric practice since 1994.



Robert Vodvarka, OD '69

LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

Robert Vodvarka, OD '69 was born in Chicago, and attended Fenwick High School in Oak Park. He completed his undergraduate degree at Western Illinois University and graduated from ICO in 1969. He served as an optometry officer in the Air Force in San Antonio until 1972. He was awarded Young Optometrist of the Year in 1978 and Optometrist of the Year in 1986 from the Texas Optometric Association. He has held all the offices of the Texas Optometric Association including serving as president 1983-1984.





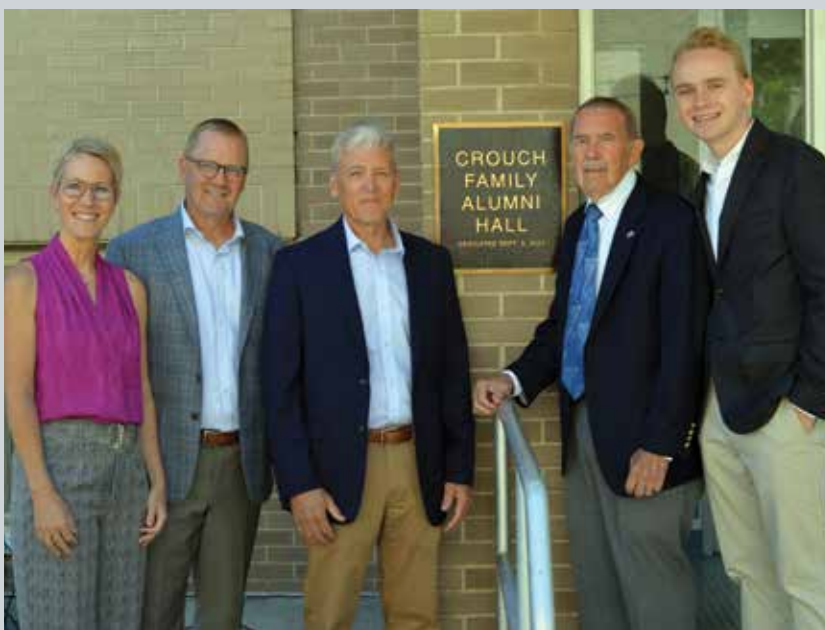
CROUCH FAMILY ALUMNI HALL DEDICATION

This past Homecoming, we held an especially exciting ceremony on Saturday afternoon when Brady Hall was renamed the "Crouch Family Alumni Hall" during a rededication celebration in recognition of Dr. Crouch's latest gift to ICO.

Donovan Crouch, OD '63 has generously supported ICO for many years and has never passed up an opportunity to be involved at his alma mater. Since 2000, he has served on ICO's Alumni Council and, since 2002, on ICO's Board of Trustees. He now holds Emeritus status in both, an honor bestowed upon only a select few. Throughout the years, Dr. Crouch and his family have been consistent and generous supporters of ICO's mission. "Lois, the family and I could not have the lifestyle that we enjoy today without our ICO education. This is a way to give back to the profession," said Dr. Crouch during the rededication ceremony.

Dr. Crouch isn't the only optometrist in the family. There are his sons **Craig Crouch, OD '90** and **Kevin Crouch, OD '94**, both ICO alumni, along with Dr. Kevin Crouch's wife, **Ashley Crouch, OD '94**. His grandson, **Dayne Crouch '25**, is currently in his third year at ICO, maintaining the family's commitment to ICO and optometry.

In recognition of his profound impact and generous stewardship, during the ceremony ICO President **Mark Colip, OD '92**, acknowledged Dr. Crouch's service, describing him as one of ICO's most generous supporters. Dr. Crouch's support led to the unanimous decision of ICO's Board of Trustees to rename the building as "Crouch Family Alumni Hall" during the rededication celebration.



L-R: daughter-in-law, **Ashley Crouch, OD '94**, sons, **Kevin Crouch, OD '94** and **Craig Crouch, OD '90**, **Donovan Crouch, OD '63** and grandson, **Dayne Crouch '25**.



SATURDAY CLASS REUNION DINNER





If four walls could talk, they'd tell a thousand stories. But perhaps one of the strangest they might tell is how two friends decided one night to throw a party and in so doing, built a tradition that continues to this day.

"It was just a party.... it was just a party that got structured," says **Brent Gandolfi, OD '84** co-founder of the original Blind Spot "It was Friday night, and we just needed a place to blow off steam from the intense week." There weren't many places for twenty-something-year-olds to relax in Bronzeville in the 80s. So, Brent Gandolfi and his roommate **Scott Wojciechowski, OD '84** took matters into their own hands, "We took the door off our dorm room, put it across the top of two chairs in the hallway, and sold beers for \$0.10 and kamikaze shots for \$0.25."

"We tried to figure out how much we could charge and break even," continues Dr. Wojciechowski, "We opened our doors, we had barely gotten an hour in, and we were already running out of beer." So, they ran to the store and got some more.

On Fridays at 4:00 pm, the party would start, and it got crowded fast. "We would have 200-300 people in the hallway, so we needed to expand. There was space in the Brady Hall basement. I went to the administration and asked for a couple of thousand dollars to remodel it, and they instantly said yes," explains Dr. Gandolfi. Everyone chipped in to make the bar a success. "I had a classmate, **Mark Mlsna, OD '84**, he worked in construction, and he built a 15-foot wet bar in the basement. We got a bunch of people to volunteer time. We painted the walls. We put chairs in. We had a video company bring in video games and just like that, we had our very own bar in the basement."



Perhaps, it was just a party, but unintentionally Brent Gandolfi and Scott Wojciechowski had effectively built a “third place” for ICO students.

In 1989, Ray Oldenburg published a book titled “The Great Good Place” in which he emphasized the importance of “third places” distinct from the home (first place) and the workplace or in our case, the College (second place). The coffee shop, the bookstore, the local bar, the barbershop around the corner these are all third places. Third places are accessible, affordable, and welcoming. It’s a judgement-free space, where you don’t have to be productive, where familial duties can be left behind (for at least a few hours). It’s a space to simply be. And for the Class of 1984, a third space was desperately needed at ICO. “We got to ICO, and we were kind of stuck in Brady Hall,” says Scott Wojciechowski, “The area around ICO was pretty sparse back then. There was no convenience store. There was no liquor store. There was just nothing much for any of the students. We kind of felt like we were trapped there.”

Perhaps because of this pent-up demand, perhaps because optometry students really need a place to relax, very soon, even the new bar couldn’t fit the crowds. So, they moved across the street to Rodriguez Hall and roped in their classmates who had started a band to make things even livelier.

“When we started bringing in the band, more than once they had to turn on the lights or zap the power to get us to leave. It was that kind of fun,” **Joe Tobias, OD ’84** says with a smile as he pages through the 1984 yearbook. “I left my home in Trenton, NJ and came to Chicago and, you know, felt like a real small fish in an ocean. Being out of town and away from home, in my case for the first time, the Blind Spot was the place to build fellowship. I just remember being young and wanting to have a party and wanting to be in a band.” The Adipose Rhythm Dukes, now perhaps better known as **Bob Dickey, OD ’84; Andy Lorand, OD ’84; Tom Banton, OD ’84; Fred Hjerpe, OD ’84** and of course, **Joe Tobias, OD ’84** would play well into the night, and at least once, even when the janitors cut the lights for the night, everyone kept singing even though without electricity the band couldn’t play.

*Presenting the Adipose –
Rhythm Dukes*



**“It was Friday night,
and we just needed
a place to blow off
steam from the
intense week.”**

Brent Gandolfi, OD ’84

A bar, a big party, live music, Warren Zevon and Del Shannon’s “Runaway” what do these stories have to do with the room with a red neon sign that now stands where the original Blind Spot stood? Actually, a whole lot.

The need for third places has not disappeared. If anything, the need has become more acute.



1984



“Being out of town and away from home, in my case for the first time, the Blind Spot was the place to build fellowship.”

Joseph Tobias Jr., OD '84

In 2023, the surgeon general published an 82-page report on the epidemic of loneliness, and how time together has shifted over the last 20 years. Here is how our time together has changed in the past decades:

- When looking at the average time spent alone the numbers have only gone up. In 2003 people averaged around 142.5-hours/month alone, in 2019 the numbers increased to 154.5-hours/month and continued to increase in 2020 to 166.5-hours/month. This represents an increase of 24 hours per month spent alone.
- The amount of time respondents engaged with friends socially in-person has also decreased from 30-hours/month in 2003 to 10-hours/month in 2020. In other words, we spend a third less time engaging with friends than we did a decade ago.

This decline is starkest for young people aged 15 to 24. For this age group, time spent in-person with friends has decrease by nearly 70% over almost two decades, from roughly 150 minutes per day in 2003 to 40 minutes per day in 2020. This is the population that will be entering optometry school in the next few years.

And these statistics don't even touch on the isolation of those who belong to marginalized groups who may feel they don't fit in many of these third places. Addressing these specific concerns was one of the drivers behind the newly founded Blind Spot space.

“Building a space like this wasn't first born out of the idea of the Blind Spot being important,” confesses **Scott Jens, OD '91**, the donor who was instrumental in bringing the Blind Spot back. “Our goal was to improve the campus' support for marginalized students and specifically the LGBTQIA+ community. We first thought scholarships, but then we started talking about campus life. My daughter, Shay, was a participant in the utilization of an LGBTQIA+ community space at UW-Madison where she went to school, and she suggested building a similar community space at ICO. **Leonard Messner, OD** mentioned the former Blind Spot space as a potential on-campus space. And then all of us together had this moment where those two ideas melded into a sort of an AHA moment, like this idea has real potential.”

“The Blind Spot is a space to just exist, and those aren't that common. It's just such a great space for LGBTQIA+ students to come together,” says **Alyssa Lancaster, OD '21**



2023

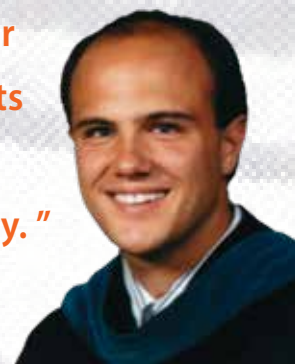


1991



"Our goal was to improve the campuses support for marginalized students and specifically the LGBTQIA+ community."

Scott Jens, OD '91



the co-founder of Queer Eye Club, "Just having a space for students to come to gather as themselves and to not feel judged or experience any sort of discrimination, I think is so important as people, but also as students in what is a really vulnerable time in their lives. I hope that this space sets the precedence for similar types of spaces. These spaces shouldn't be a rarity." Although very clearly built with the Queer Eye Club in mind, the space has expanded to welcome all ICO students.

This sentiment is mirrored in how the original founders talk about their Blind Spot.

"In the Blind Spot, I mean, everybody and anybody could come," says Scott Wojciechowski. "Blind Spot was about people just wanting to be with people. I hope that's something they'll continue now as well. It isn't just a place you go to have a drink and then leave. You go there to hang out with everyone. Our Blind Spot bound anybody who came through that door together," adds Dr. Gandolfi

When asked what Dr. Tobias hopes that this new Blind Spot might take from the old Blind Spot, the first suggestion was that we make sure we have a good logo (see the bartender's shirts on the previous page), but

after thinking a little harder, he hit on something more profound, "The friendships that have lasted a lifetime came out of the Blind Spot," Dr. Tobias put simply. "Look at the person that you're sitting next to and think of them when you're both 65 and try to imagine. Imagine that someday, it's gonna be 40 years later, you'll be retired, but that person sitting beside you in this room could very well still be your friend."

Third places are vital in fostering the type of conversations and connections that build trust. Blind Spot was and is this space at ICO.

Class of 1984, in case you're wondering, there's still a tapped keg there whenever you need it. Stop by next time you visit.



Hear from the current co-presidents of Queer Eye Club on the importance of Blind Spot for students at ICO.

Interview with: Nora Matland

with

Kelly A. Frantz, OD, FAAO, FCOVD

Professor of Optometry



Since 1986, **Dr. Kelly Frantz** has been an instrumental part of the ICO community. As an educational veteran, Dr. Frantz has seen much change during her time at ICO. From the era of overhead transparencies to the novelty of 35-mm slides to streaming classes from the Lecture Center, she has navigated changes in the ICO education and adapted as the times and needs have changed. As a constant for so many students, we wanted to get to know her better. So, we sat down with her to learn a bit about her as she moves into the second quarter of her 37th year of teaching.

When did you become interested in optometry?

Well, I got into optometry by starting to learn about it all the way back in seventh grade. I had myopia like so many other kids, and I was intrigued how my optometrist helped me see more clearly. I was also into science. In seventh grade, they asked us to start thinking about what we wanted to be when we grew up. And so, I started researching optometry in my school library. At that point, I wasn't thinking about optometric education, just doing eye exams. I didn't even know that much about optometry, but somehow, I just knew it was the profession for me.

How has ICO changed over the years? What is it about ICO that's made you stay for all these years?

The people – the students, the other faculty – it's a warm, inviting community, and I enjoy being with these folks. I find great satisfaction in teaching the students, the specialty I've gotten into, and the opportunities that ICO has provided me to engage in research, clinical care, and teaching. I'm very fulfilled staying at ICO, and I haven't wanted to go elsewhere.

Over the years, there have been a lot of changes. We've completely changed how we teach. The information has changed, but also the methods that information is relayed have completely changed. Video has now become an important didactic tool. I teach a lot in the laboratories, and we need to do demonstrations. We used to do that just spontaneously explaining it to our students as they gathered around us. There was nothing archival for them to study later.

Now, we have videos that show how to do a lot of vision therapy procedures. Students can watch them over and over again ad nauseam. They can study and practice for their practical exam as well as review them when they need to use those procedures in the clinic.

It sounds like you're a person who really loves education and the innovation that comes from different generational needs and expectations, would you agree?

I haven't seriously thought about education my whole life, but my mother would say that I have. At six, I was playing school with my little brother. I'd sit him down and make him do worksheets that I made for him. For some reason, he cooperated even though he was only three. At PCO/Salus, where I got my OD degree, I was a teaching assistant. I also did a residency to further explore the opportunity of teaching, and that's when I really decided, "Yes, this is for me."

That's what I've done ever since.

It's much more intriguing to me to do patient care when there are students involved because I have the excitement of sharing that experience with them. I like to see the light bulb go on for the students as they start to understand things and see something they learned about in the classroom now applied in clinic.

What's one thing that you would want incoming students to know about the field of optometry and also your field specifically?

I want incoming students to know there are so many options within optometry and that becoming a doctor requires a lot of hard work.

They need to be ready psychologically for the journey ahead. It takes a lot to juggle all the classes, laboratories, and clinic sessions with dedication. To be an excellent optometrist, there's a lot to know.



Hear Dr. Frantz's entire interview.

Any closing thoughts on what it's like to be a teacher at ICO?

Something really important about ICO is that we have a long history. So, we have a lot of experience in optometric education. We have a lot of very experienced faculty, and I think that sets us apart. I know ahead of time which things are going to trip up the students, so I can explain it more than one way. Anticipating the problems that they might have; I try to be as thorough and accurate as possible in explaining what the students need to know. That comes in part from our long history and my own long history with the institution.

Then, there are our patients. Even a routine diagnosis in our clinic often brings with it a patient who has so many other issues that it becomes complex. At ICO, we find that we're managing all kinds of complexities. The education the students receive is top-notch because of these experiences.

Close Up: Bill Park, OD '77

Interview by: Nora Matland
Photos by: Brian Holloway



Watch more from Dr. Park on how family values shaped his family practice.



8:30 A.M.

"Time to check in with the staff and begin the day. After 40 years of practice, we have a pretty steady flow of patients, but when I started, I didn't have many patients. I'd come whenever a patient wanted to be there. I'd be there early and stay late. Luckily, it's a different story these days."

When Dr. Park began his practice, he started with a beat-up chair and hand-me-down frame racks. With a can of paint and a lot of hard work, little by little he built a thriving clinic. "I saw my dad working seven days a week," Dr. Park says. "When I started, I worked six days a week, but it was an easy job compared to my parents."

Dr. Park's clinic has remained a cornerstone of the North Aurora community. "In North Aurora, they feel that I'm a treasure in the community. I feel so honored to be called that," says Dr. Park.

The North Aurora community isn't the only group that has benefitted immensely from Dr. Park's support. This year, Dr. Park was recognized as the IOA 2023 Optometrist of the Year. Last year, ICO awarded him the 2022 Lifetime Service Award. He has served on the ICO Alumni Council Board, was an executive council member of the Illinois Optometric Association and has been President of the Exchange Club of Aurora, the North Aurora Lions Club and the Fox Valley Optometric Society. Needless to say, he's been busy.

In 2004, with his son joining the practice and his daughter well on her way to completing her degree, the business was renamed Park Family Eye Care. Here's a glimpse into a day in his life as an optometrist practicing with his family in North Aurora.



9:15 A.M.

"I practice with my son, Quentin and daughter, Lena. I usually take the morning patients. That means I treat a lot of the older patients."

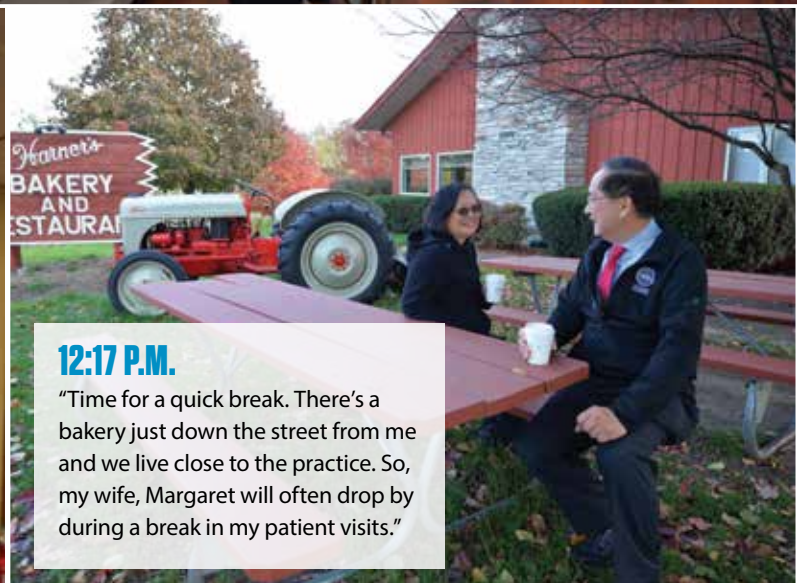
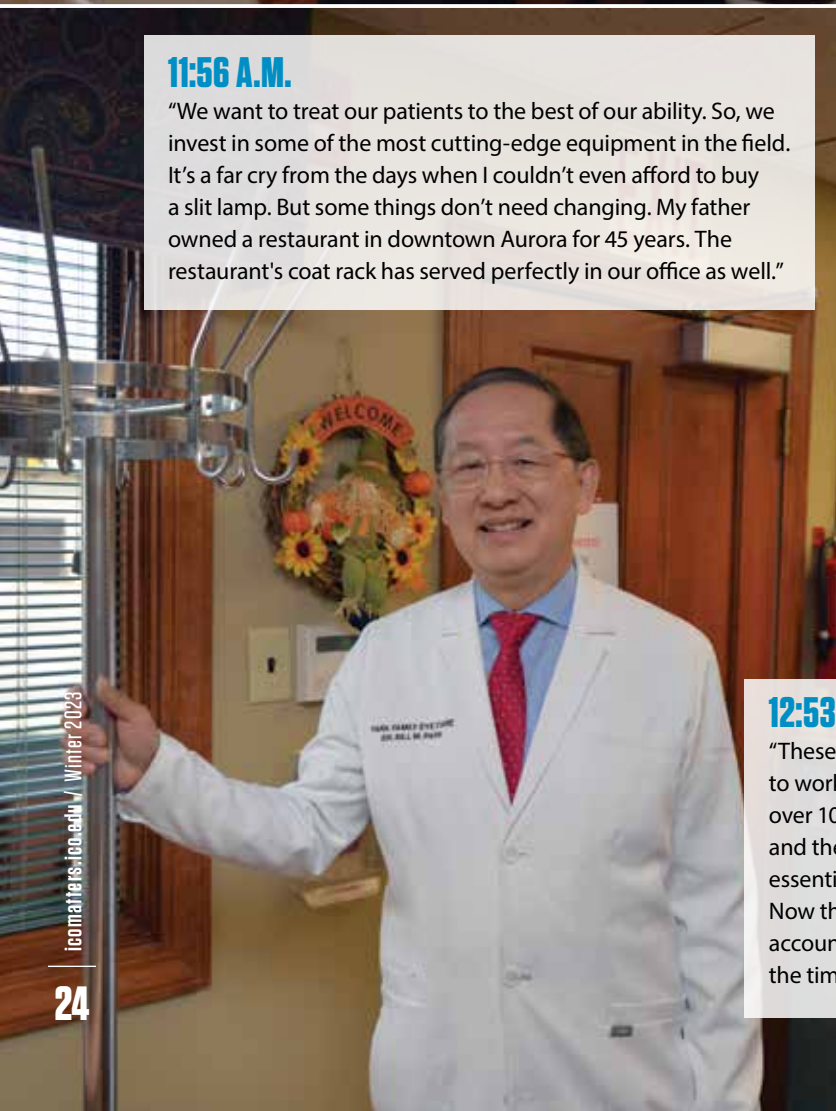


10:39 A.M.

"Today I have a special treat in the clinic because I'm seeing my 9th grade teacher. Ms. Patti Readey inspired me to become an optometrist. It's wonderful to have her as a patient so many years later. I went through grade school, junior high, and high school in East Aurora. Then my undergrad degree is from Aurora University. Later, many of the teachers and students became my patients."

11:56 A.M.

"We want to treat our patients to the best of our ability. So, we invest in some of the most cutting-edge equipment in the field. It's a far cry from the days when I couldn't even afford to buy a slit lamp. But some things don't need changing. My father owned a restaurant in downtown Aurora for 45 years. The restaurant's coat rack has served perfectly in our office as well."



12:17 P.M.

"Time for a quick break. There's a bakery just down the street from me and we live close to the practice. So, my wife, Margaret will often drop by during a break in my patient visits."

12:53 P.M.

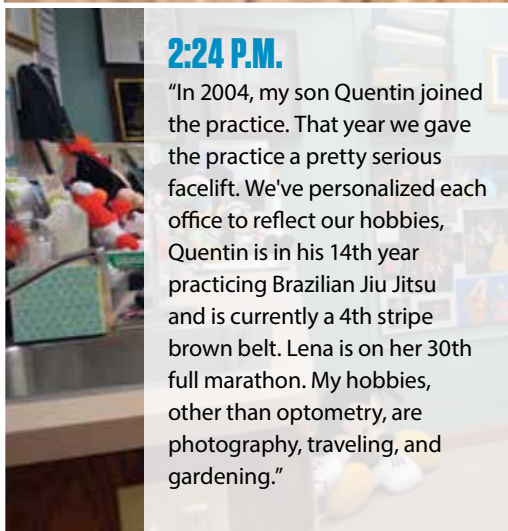
"These days, Margaret doesn't have to work full-time in the clinic, but for over 10 years, she oversaw the billing and the front desk. She played an essential role in building the practice. Now thankfully, we worry less about accounts payable and instead spend the time taking afternoon walks."





1:30 P.M.

"With Margaret working in the office and me spending most of my days here, our kids grew up in this office. Here's a throwback of them then and one of them now."



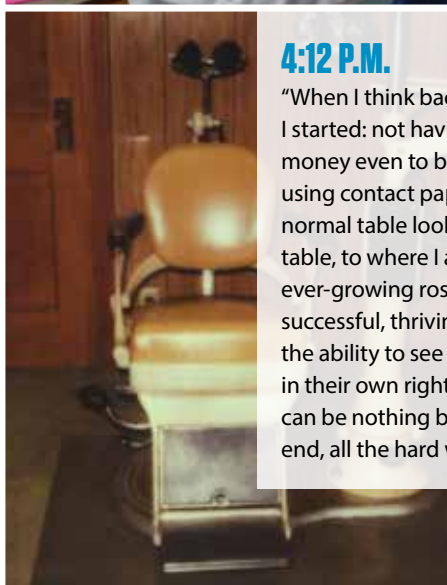
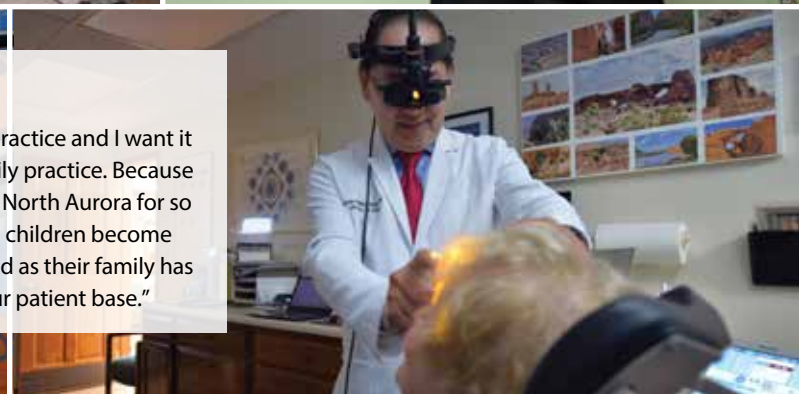
2:24 P.M.

"In 2004, my son Quentin joined the practice. That year we gave the practice a pretty serious facelift. We've personalized each office to reflect our hobbies, Quentin is in his 14th year practicing Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and is currently a 4th stripe brown belt. Lena is on her 30th full marathon. My hobbies, other than optometry, are photography, traveling, and gardening."



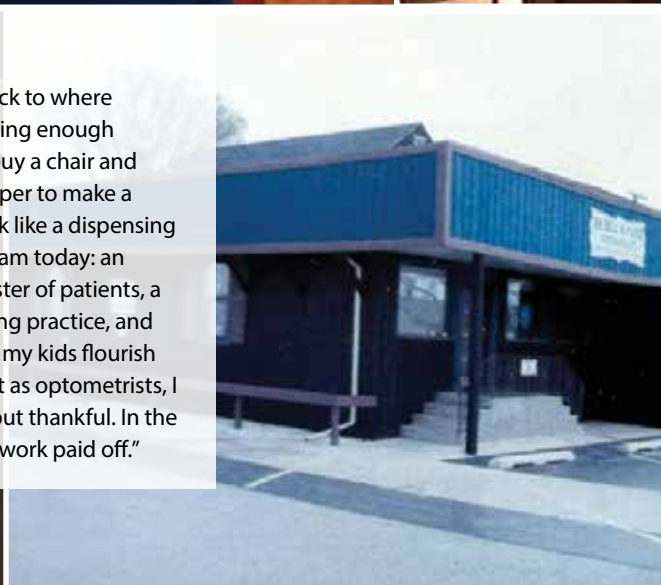
3:48 P.M.

"We're a family practice and I want it to feel like a family practice. Because we have been in North Aurora for so long, I have seen children become grandparents and as their family has grown, so has our patient base."



4:12 P.M.

"When I think back to where I started: not having enough money even to buy a chair and using contact paper to make a normal table look like a dispensing table, to where I am today: an ever-growing roster of patients, a successful, thriving practice, and the ability to see my kids flourish in their own right as optometrists, I can be nothing but thankful. In the end, all the hard work paid off."





Revolutionizing Optometry:

TELEHEALTH, AI, AND THE FUTURE OF PATIENT CARE AT ICO

BY NORA MATLAND

This November, ICO held its very first Ophthalmic Technology and Innovation Summit. Recognizing the changing landscape of optometry, ICO took the initiative to expose students to the rapid changes within the field and prepare them for the future of optometry. Supported by our corporate sponsors, the summit featured plenary talks, product theatre sessions and even a mix-and-mingle event at the end of the night.

With so much evolving and changing in this space, we wanted to provide you with a few takeaways from the plenary sessions. Here we will focus on telehealth and AI:

Tele-Optometry: Improving Patient Outreach and Access to Care

Takeaway #1: Remote analysis of both refractive and accommodative testing is feasible.

In May 2021, five ICO doctors took on the challenge of integrating tele-optometry into the curriculum. Since 2021, these faculty members have been examining patients two days a week with fourth-year externs. Over the last two years, these doctors have proven that most routine exams, including prescribing contact lenses, can be effectively done in a remote environment.

Takeaway #2: You need well-trained technicians to ensure that patients can be effectively diagnosed.

The demand for remote care and tele-optometry is rising; especially in rural areas where there may not be a nearby optometrist. There, optometric testing stations fill a clear gap. In these places, technicians play a critical role in conducting fundus images and entrance testing. In order to

Tapping into the power of AI algorithms allows for detailed insights into ocular conditions, leading to more accurate and consistent diagnoses and tailored treatment plans.

train these technicians, our doctors collaborated with the communications team to create short instructive videos to ensure the correct testing technique. Once the technicians were properly trained, diagnosis became much more efficient.

In this way, our doctors have been able to ensure the safety and effectiveness of remote examinations.

Takeaway #3: Tele-optometry has “hard-stops” which requires a patient to see an optometrist in person.

Remote exams have proven to be effective in many areas, however, the team has also implemented a system of “hard stops” when potential ocular and systemic diseases are found. These include, among other things, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, keratoconus, and many other diseases that require a more extensive in-person exam.

Luckily, in most cases, there is a built-in referral network, so patients can be directed to an in-person doctor.

To continue advancing our profession, it is incumbent upon us to test and to incorporate new practice methods and modalities. We're excited to be implementing these new developments into the ICO curriculum and to see how these advances will shape the future of how we deliver care.

AI: Using Diagnostic Equipment to Identify Markers of Health

For the next talk, we focused on the integration of AI tools. Ali Tafreshi, President of the Innovation Center at Topcon, walked us through how optometry and healthcare overlap. He emphasized ICO's pivotal role in training optometrists, and the importance of understanding the new data this technology can create. Here are a few takeaways from his talk:

Takeaway #1: Optometry is at the forefront of not only eye care, but healthcare in general.

As optometrists, we have access to so much information about the human body. Not only that, because of the frequency with which patients interact with optometrists, we are often the first to identify important underlying diseases. There is already a vast amount of data generated from the diagnostic tests that we do, and AI will help us use that data to improve the health of our patients. Tapping into the power of AI algorithms allows for detailed insights into ocular conditions, leading to more accurate and consistent diagnoses and tailored treatment plans. When we integrate a doctor's knowledge with the large and complex datasets that AI can process, we can unlock all kinds of new discoveries. Topcon is working to merge these two fields and to build models that predict systemic cardiovascular and neurological diseases, all through an eye exam.

Takeaway #2: AI-Enabled decision data boards will identify risk factors even before they are visible to the native eye

AI processes huge amounts of data and finds patterns that we, as humans, are unable to detect. In the last few years, researchers have been working on ocular imaging biomarkers that can provide significant insight into systemic diseases. Multi-omics provide a holistic understanding of a patient's health through non-invasive imaging of the eye. Currently, Topcon is working on digital risk calculators that will be introduced as AI-enabled tools that enhance decision making in various aspects of optometry. These tools should enable doctors to treat beyond healthcare silos.

The convergence of tele-optometry and AI at ICO signals a shift in optometric care, where technology and practice overlap for the benefit of patients. As ICO continues to pioneer these advancements, the institution will guide the profession towards a future where optimal patient care is pushed beyond today's limits.

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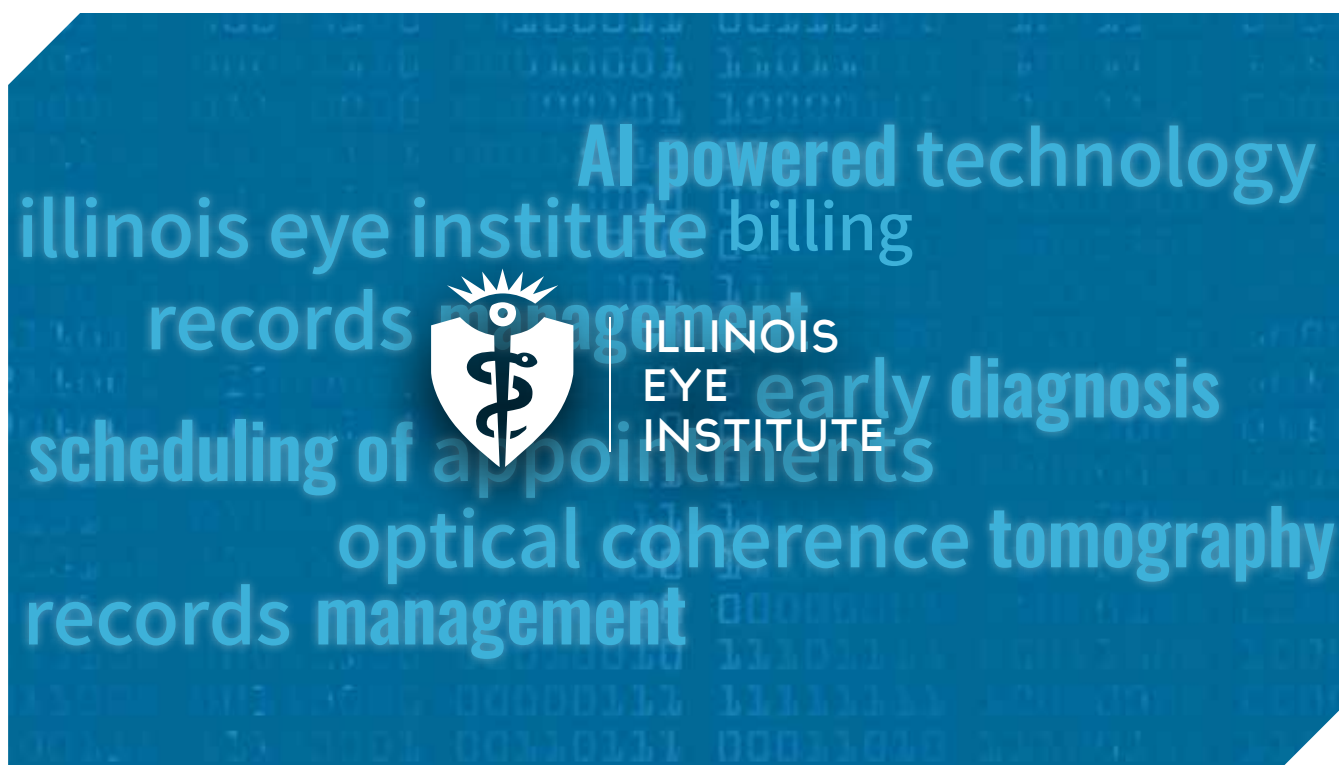
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Op Ed: The Interface of AI Technology and Optometry Is Here

BY SHEILA QUIRKE



Earlier this year, “Everything Everywhere All at Once” won the Academy Award for Best Picture. That seems fitting in this moment where the confluence of AI, artificial intelligence, and healthcare feels similarly frenetic. It can absolutely feel like everything is shifting everywhere in healthcare all at once right now, thanks to quickly evolving technology powered by AI that increasingly impacts both patients and providers.

It can also feel like things are just as they have been. Students are being educated for careers in optometry, patients continue to rely upon ODs to meet their vision needs, and optometrists across the country are doing their level best to keep up with demand in a field that is the primary provider of eye care in America.

Both of these things can be true simultaneously.

While many in the field of optometry may not be attune to or plugged into the shifting landscape and increased presence of AI within the field, others are keenly aware and working hard to ensure that technological advances are being made that enhance patient care outcomes

as they lift the administrative and clinical burdens of providers in a responsible and ethical manner.

As a legacy academic institution, ICO is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between the old guard of tech and this new landscape of AI that is rapidly becoming a fixture within healthcare and many other industries. For the ICO alumni base, students, staff, and faculty, understanding where the field is and where it is moving in terms of AI is essential.

AI IS ALREADY HERE

Whether it is realized or not, AI is already part of many people’s day-to-day activities. Google maps get people where they need to go, often changing course in real time using AI. Facial recognition unlocks access to smartphones using AI. Even that common end-of-day ritual of kicking back and relaxing with a streaming service recommendation of what to watch on TV is a function powered by AI.

AI is becoming more common in the optometry field, just as it is in other spaces. Computerized algorithms are currently in use at the Illinois Eye Institute, providing assistance



Industry experts estimate that **more progress** has been made within AI in the **past ten months** than in the previous **ten years combined**.

with records management, billing, and scheduling of appointments. The tech infrastructure was introduced three to four years ago to good effect, lightening the load of staff and providers to better meet patient needs.

On the clinical side, AI has been enlisted in the diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy and other eye disorders via optical coherence tomography (OCT). The algorithms unlocked by AI are consistently refined and growing more powerful and accurate, enabling early diagnosis – sometimes even before symptoms emerge. Early detection, of course, is directly related to better care and outcomes for patients.

INNOVATION VS. REGULATION

With any emerging technology, there is often an implicit tension between innovation and regulation. Is progress more important than safety? Does government oversight always lead to a stifling of advancement? The answer to both of those questions is a definitive no. Innovation and regulation are both integral to progress and advancement. The trick is finding the right balance.

Never has this been more crucial than with the shifts within AI technology. Industry experts estimate that more progress has been made within AI in the past ten months than in the previous ten years combined. This is a singular moment when the power of AI to aid and assist is possible, but it must be done with oversight and an emphasis on risk, liability, validity, and patient safety.

THE NEED FOR HUMAN OVERSIGHT

Because the nature of AI involves decision making – leveraging decisions to make more accurate diagnoses, mobilizing decisions to positively impact patient care, and extrapolating decisions to better understand and predict public health needs, the stakes for getting it right are high.

It is imperative that as AI and its influence on healthcare in general and within the fields of optometry and ophthalmology grow, there must be the best and brightest within our field to ensure optometrists have input into creating and monitoring the algorithms that will go on to impact patients and providers worldwide.

Commercial interests are driving the speed of AI's development, but as healthcare professionals, optometrists have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that the power of AI within optometry is used to improve patient health and wellbeing as well as to help maintain and promote the unique skill set and training of ODs.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Whatever the future holds, it will involve AI, including, and perhaps most especially, in the field of optometry and ocular health. Industry experts believe that optometrists will be at the front lines of what some believe is a potential revolution in how healthcare is provided. Within five to ten years, a future is possible where ODs act not just as the hub of eyecare, but as the hub of healthcare.

Using non-invasive AI powered technology, researchers and developers are working to transform a general eye exam into a full system health inventory. Scans and images taken of and through the eye will be used to better predict and understand systemic health. Cardiovascular disease, neurology, and a host of other healthcare specialties will be utilizing data points extracted from eye exams to both identify disease and treat patients.

Which leads right back to that overwhelming sense of Everything Everywhere All at Once. The academic curiosity that is and has been a cardinal trait of ICO will serve the institution well in what is certain to become a transformative stage within the field of optometry.

While artificial intelligence has the potential to help clinicians interpret data more quickly, to make better decisions around patient care and treatment more consistent, and to have access to unprecedented degrees of information, at the crux of all those things is the optometrist.

ICO has been and will remain a stalwart advocate for our students and alumni, our faculty, and our patient base. As in every other period of technological transformation within the field, ICO will embrace change while adhering to the highest ethical standards, ensuring innovation while minimizing risk to help shape the future.

Essentials: Joseph Herba, OD '88



Many optometrists love their profession, and we know that many of our current students committed to optometry because their optometrist saw great potential in them. However, most optometrists cannot say they guided 82 patients into this wonderful field. **Joseph Herba, OD '88** can claim exactly that.

"ICO has done more for me than I could have ever imagined. To be able to be accepted into this field, and to have the lifestyle I have, it's just wonderful," says Dr. Herba. "Optometry offers me so much freedom, and there's so much joy in taking care of patients. It's been a great run, and I can't imagine a sounder education."

For 32 years, he has run his practice in Crystal Lake, and in that time, he has changed so many lives. "It's about sharing with my patients the opportunity I was given. When I see kids who are interested in health care, I try to open as many doors to optometry as possible," he continues. "ICO needs to have good representation in the community, and we should guide patients who are positive about the field. When we do this, it's of great benefit to all of us."

Here are a few of his essentials.

A COMPANION FOR A WALK IN THE WOODS

"For as long as my children can remember, we had Labrador Retrievers in the family. As a hobby, I train them. Retrievers were originally bred to retrieve fish that had jumped out of the net. Even today, they stay true to their name: drop pretty much anything you have, and they'll bring it back to you. I also love them because they're friendly, adventurous dogs who are willing to try pretty much anything. That makes them great companions for me when I am out for day-long hikes in the wilderness. It's a hobby I inherited from my father. He too trained dogs."





Dr. Herba receives his Alumnus of the Year award.

SUPPORTING MY COMMUNITY. SUPPORTING OUR PROFESSION.

"I've practiced in Crystal Lake, IL since 1991. I've built some really strong relationships during that time, and I want my patients to understand just how great a career this can be. I've gotten a lot of students interested in optometry, but, in some cases, taking an unpaid internship to gain shadowing experience can deter students from choosing optometry. I've worked in corporate offices for most of my career, and with both Luxottica and Shopko, I've gotten the support I needed to hire students as opticians. We hire them in their junior year of college and work with them before they apply to optometry school. It has been a tremendous bonus to my staff, and most of the students I talk to say that this makes their first year much easier. To give a kid a leg up and help our profession at the same time, I mean, you can't ask for more than that. We're giving back to the community and making sure this profession stays strong. It's a win-win.

A LIFE LIVED OUTDOORS

"Although I cannot speak his language, I inherited many things from my father, in particular, his love for the outdoors. Growing up in the '70s, the West Side of Chicago had a decent wild pheasant population, and my dad and I used to go into the wilderness all day long hunting pheasants. Now the same area is subdivisions, but for me, that semi-wild area was an important part of my childhood years."



ALL THINGS WATER. ALL THE TIME.

"When I was growing up, we didn't really travel. I never saw the ocean as a kid, but I fell in love with marine life in middle school. I was so passionate about it that I had planned to finish out my undergrad in Oahu, Hawaii, as a marine biologist. Ultimately, though, I ended up at Loyola, which had a strong marine biology department. I learned to dive there. One of the co-founders of PADI, Ralph Erickson, was my instructor during that time. PADI is now the leading scuba dive training organization in the world. I didn't become a marine biologist, but I continued to dive. These days, I try to see the ocean as often as possible.



Our love of water extends beyond marine life. We now live by a lake. We fish and jet ski. I spend as much time in the water as I can."

CHICAGO TIES

"I grew up in a small Polish community on the West Side of the city. It was a very tight-knit community; all the neighbors took good care of one another. My father arrived in Chicago after WWII, when a large group of Poles was immigrating to America. At that time, I remember there was a lot of aggression towards those who spoke anything but English. My father forbade speaking Polish at home, and so although I feel very strongly Polish, today, I don't speak the language."



FROM PATIENT TO COLLEAGUE

"I've guided a lot of patients into this profession, but **Brett Freitag, OD** was one of my favorites. Brett came in for an exam when he was 8. I had taken care of his brother and parents before that, and now it was his turn. He really enjoyed himself during the exam and had all kinds of questions. His mother called me after the exam, saying, 'You must have really impressed him because now he wants to be an optometrist.' Of course, given that he was 8, I took his commitment with a grain of salt, but Brett was committed. He held on to that dream, got into optometry school, and then worked with me for a year after he graduated. When he left, he said, 'One of my childhood dreams was to work with you. Now I can say I have fulfilled that.' He's now practicing in Phoenix, but I'm glad that our careers were able to overlap for at least a year."



Brett's picture when he practiced at the Shopko in Crystal Lake.

Research Highlight:

Efficacy and Acceptance of Tele-optometry

Take aways from a 2019 study on the satisfaction of tele-optometric care led by Jaymeni Patel, OD '16.

During the pandemic, everyone had to come up with new ways to interact, and healthcare had an even more urgent need to adapt. Health providers had to change how we interact with technology and how we access tele-medical platforms. That experience shifted the paradigm for health care. Moving forward, we know that technology will play a pivotal role in reshaping healthcare. Tele-optometry improves accessibility to eyecare services and in this context, holds immense potential in addressing healthcare disparities.



Jaymeni Patel, OD '16

Initial research showed that telehealth can play an essential role in improving access to care. 1- Previous studies have shown that telehealth can lessen factors that lead to non-compliance with follow-up visits. 2- Tele-optometry may also be the only viable option, especially in rural areas where access to quality medical services is limited. The opportunity to see patients remotely in rural areas and the decrease in travel time, costs, and unnecessary referrals has made telehealth invaluable in these circumstances.

In 2019, we conducted a preliminary study on the efficacy and acceptance of tele-optometry, which resulted in four published papers. Two papers explored the accuracy of tele-optometry, including its refractive capabilities as well as its performance in binocular vision and accommodative testing. The third evaluated the validity of the ocular health testing. The last paper focused on comparing the tele-optometric examination experience with a traditional, in-person comprehensive eye examination.

Our investigation included 30 healthy optometry students. Participants underwent both a tele-optometric and a traditional in-person eye examination, followed by satisfaction surveys. Surveys were also given at the end of the study, which allowed participants to pinpoint specific areas of dissatisfaction between the two exams.

After each exam, we asked participants if we had addressed their concerns, if they were satisfied with their care, and then to rate the quality of each examination. We found no statistically significant difference between the two examinations. However, participants expressed concerns about the absence of an optometrist in the room during the telehealth examination and the potential implications for the doctor-patient relationship. Most participants preferred to return for in-person examinations.

Optometry students, who were the subjects of our exams, are future optometrists and may have innate biases towards an in-person examination versus a tele-optometric examination. The public may have a different understanding and attitude towards tele-optometry, and we recommend further studies with larger and more diverse populations to obtain a better understanding of patient satisfaction with tele-optometry.

Another important factor was health and safety. Although this research was conducted in 2019, we saw it actively implemented only a few months later. Telehealth can protect providers and patients by stopping the spread of diseases. Especially in community outbreaks, telehealth decreases face-to-face time which in turn decreases exposure. During the pandemic, this also helped to minimize gaps in patient care.

This study was completed in 2019, and when we began our research, we weren't anticipating how soon it would be necessary. However, we recognized that AI and technology were expanding. We need to keep up with these advances. The optimal care of patients is always at the center of what we do — even when that may take us out of our comfort zone.



Initial research showed that tele-medicine can play an essential role in improving access to care.

Class Notes

1970s

1978

The Old Irving Park Community Clinic provides free medical and mental health care for those in the Chicago's 30th Ward and beyond. ICO Emeritus Professor, **Dr. Dominick Maino** is a consultant to the OIPCC.

As a community activist, Dr. Maino has connected Chicago's 30th Ward Alderwoman, Ruth Cruz to the clinic to help get the word out about this community resource.

If you live in and around the 30th Ward and need medical or mental healthcare, contact the OIPCC today.

The Old Irving Park Community Clinic information can be found here (<https://www.oipcc.org/>)

Dr. Maino has been active in his community for decades, and is an Emeritus Board member of the Filament Theatre. He is currently a Goodman Theatre Generations trained storyteller and playwright, and is the creator, curator, and host of the Six Corners StoryTellers who performs the last Wednesday of the month at Tatas Kitchen and Social. His "Stories for a Cause" program has raised more than a \$1,000.00 for neighborhood not for profits.

1980s

1983

Jeff Hilovsky was elected to the Delaware House of Representatives in November 2022 to represent the citizens of the 4th District. He serves on the Health and Human Development, Education, Housing, Labor, Natural Resources and Energy, and Veterans Affairs Committees. He is the first optometrist in Delaware to be elected as a member of the General Assembly. Jeff was in private practice in Delaware for 28 years and successfully built a four-office location practice. A recipient of the Air Force Health Professions Scholarship at ICO, he practiced in the active-duty Air Force for 12 years, then joined the Air Force Reserve's 512th Air Wing at Dover AFB, DE. After serving over 25 years, he retired as Colonel and Medical Commander for nearly 2100 reserve personnel in the 512th Air Wing during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Jeff and his wife Marcia celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary in July. They have 3 grown children and 5 grandchildren.

1990s

1994

Maria Pica was named one of this year's Top 200 Optometrists by Newsweek Magazine. She practices in a large multispecialty clinic in St. Charles, IL .

2000s

2004

Nathan Bonilla-Warford has been a life-long music fan. He would occasionally DJ music for Blind Spots and performed at the ICO Opti-Rock talent show twice. This year, he fulfilled a dream of being a radio DJ. Every Monday morning from 6 to 9 am on WMNF 88.5 FM Tampa, he co-hosts a show with DJ Spaceship. They play Indie, Funk, R&B, Americana and more.
www.wmnf.org/events/the-morning-show-monday/

2006

Jennifer Harthan earned the distinction of Diplomate in Cornea, Contact Lens, and Refractive Technologies at this year's American Academy of Optometry meeting in New Orleans. Diplomates are Fellows of the Academy who wish to demonstrate their extensive skill in a specific area. Currently, nine sections offer Diplomate programs. These include: Anterior Segment, Binocular Vision, Perception and Pediatric Optometry, Comprehensive Eye Care, Cornea, Contact Lenses & Refractive Technologies, Glaucoma, Low Vision, Optometric Education, Public Health & Environmental Vision, and Vision Science.

2010

Congratulations to **Lindsay Sicks** on being inducted into the District 230 Foundation Legacy Hall.

District 230 Foundation Legacy Hall was established to recognize and showcase graduates who exemplify the core mission of District 230: adults prepared to realize their life-long potential in an ever-changing world. Read more about the honor at www.d230foundation.org/legacy-hall.

In Memoriam

1940s

1947

Sydney Harris (NICO), 100, of West Bloomfield, passed away on October 31, 2023.

He was an honored World War II veteran, serving in the Ardennes and Rhineland Campaigns as a rifleman. He was severely wounded by shrapnel in February 1945 and spent over a year in Percy Jones Hospital in Michigan. In addition to many ribbons, he also received a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. His battle wounds became reinfected approximately 15 years later after some vigorous exercise, and he spent another year and a half in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Detroit.

Sydney was very proud of his military service. After his discharge from the Army, Sydney returned to school in Chicago, graduating from Northern Illinois College of Optometry in 1947.

Shortly after, he opened a successful solo practice in Roseville, where he worked for more than 35 years. His wife worked in the business side of the office, ordering frames, making appointments and greeting patients. Sydney was honored to be an alumnus of ICO, attending class reunions as a member of the 50-Year Club and being the largest benefactor to the school from the state of Michigan.

1949

Michael Joseph Kacere, Sr., (NICO), 100, passed away on February 1, 2023.

Mike was a World War II veteran who served in the Army Air Corps from 1942 until 1945. He was a navigator on the B-17 bomber and completed 25 missions in the European theater of operation. After the war, Mike decided to use his G.I. Bill to become an optometrist. He entered college and received a doctorate degree in optometry in 1949 from Northern Illinois College of Optometry

1950s

1950

George T. Barrera (NICO), 99, passed away on February 9, 2023.

He left his hometown for the first time when he was drafted into the US Army, where he served in the China-India-Burma Theater until 1946. When returning from the war, he met and fell in love with a feisty red-headed beauty, Bertha Carrillo, of Benavides, Texas and attended Northern Illinois College of Optometry. After graduating college in 1950, he began working for Texas State Optical (TSO) in San Antonio, Texas.

Chester A. Kirkpatrick (NICO), 98, passed away on October 20, 2023.

Chester worked as a mail carrier starting in high school to help pay his way through college. Chester received a Doctor of Optometry degree from Northern Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago, Illinois, in 1950. He worked his way through optometry school by serving as an elevator operator at a Chicago hotel and walking race horses at the local horse track.

Early in his practice, Dr. Kirkpatrick served in the United States Army. After basic training, he was stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, at the Brooke Army Hospital Eye Clinic. Chester was a member of the Missouri Optometric Association and served as State Secretary of that organization for seven years. He was an active member of the West Central Optometric Association and the American Optometric Association.

Gifford "Jerry" McBride, Jr., (NICO), 99, passed away on October 4, 2023 in Oklahoma City.

Gifford graduated from Classen High School in 1942 and attended Oklahoma City University before joining the US Navy. After the war, he graduated from the University of Oklahoma, and he and his wife Anna moved to Chicago where he graduated with honors from the Northern Illinois College of Optometry.

He practiced optometry until he was 94 and loved to ride his bike down the street to his office.

1951

Harland L. Beers (NICO), 95, passed away on July 21, 2023 in Bonita Springs, FL.

He was in a group of young men drafted late in the war to be sent all over the Pacific to guard and organize the many places left in chaos. He ended up in Korea, where he saw the cruelty of war through the eyes of the Koreans,

who were left with little to rebuild their country. When he was discharged from the army, he pursued his career at Western Michigan University and Northern Illinois College of Optometry graduating in 1951.

1955

Ronald O. Davis, passed away on February 6, 2023.

He served our country in the U.S. Navy during World War II throughout the South Pacific as a morse code operator on the USS Barnes aircraft carrier. Dr. Davis graduated from the University of Washington and later graduated from the Illinois College of Optometry. He returned to Seattle and founded Davis Optical in the University District in 1955 where he joyfully practiced optometry until his retirement. Dr. Davis was a pioneer and leader in the Seattle optometric community.

1960s

1969

James Howard Howenstine, 78, passed away on September 17, 2022, in Tequesta following a courageous battle with pulmonary fibrosis. James was an optometrist for 35 years and was the owner of Ohio Valley Vision Center in Steubenville. He was active in numerous Steubenville, Ohio and Jupiter, Florida area civic and charitable organizations.

1970s

1971

Donald Ray "D.R." Gordon, 75, passed away on June 25, 2023.

He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago in 1971. He also received the President's Award at graduation.

D.R. joined his father's optometry practice in 1971 after graduation. He was also employed as the Optometric Coordinator for the state of Illinois for twenty-five years. He was the past-president of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry, past-president of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry, and past-chair of the Illinois Optometric Licensing and Disciplinary Board. He

was honored to be the Illinois Optometrist of the Year in 1991 and the Alumnus of the Year at ICO in 1998. In 2019, the Illinois Optometric Association honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

1975

James M. "Jim" Pascavis, 73, passed away on June 21, 2023. Jim earned his Doctor of Optometry from Illinois College of Optometry in 1975. After graduating, Jim and wife Jan moved to Germany where Jim served in the U.S. Army as a Captain at the 279th Army Hospital in West Berlin. He was a proud veteran, serving his country from 1975-1979, providing care and perfecting his skills as an optometrist while overseas.

1978

John P. Gabriel, 76, passed away on October 10, 2023.

John graduated from Brother Rice High School in 1965 and attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign prior to returning to Chicago. John and his wife Kathleen married in 1968 and then deployed to Bangkok, Thailand, where he served in the United States Army for three years as a communications specialist. John actively served in the Lions Club and the Holy Name Society. Concurrently, John earned his Doctor of Optometry degree from the Illinois College of Optometry; he established his optometric practice in Brighton Park where he served beloved patients for nearly 40 years. In 1983, the family moved to Palos Hills, Illinois. John rejoined the Army in the reserves as a Commissioned Officer Optometric Doctor and served the Fort Sheridan Garrison for a decade. In retirement, John relocated to La Grange and made a new and wonderful group of friends.

1980s

1981

Bradley Weyers, 68, passed away on July 30, 2023.

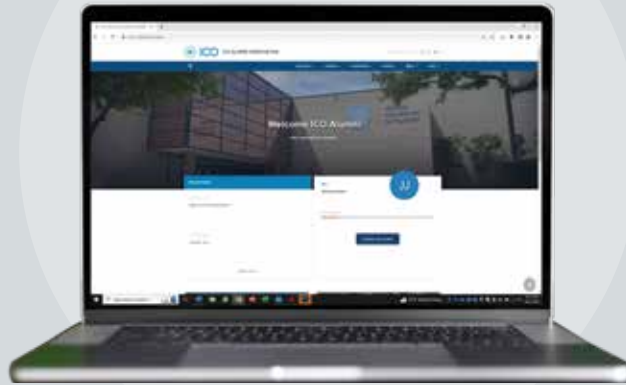
He dedicated his professional life to his work at Great River Eye Care.

Got alumni news? Please share.

Online: alumni.ico.edu/page/submit-your-class-note

Join ICO's NEW Online Community **alumni.ico.edu**

- CAREERS FOR OPTOMETRISTS, BY OPTOMETRISTS
- MORE THAN A DIRECTORY
- FIND A SPACE TO STAY CONNECTED



SCAN. LOG IN. EXPLORE.

**ICO
MATTERS
CONTINUE THE
CONVERSATION**

Look for the
QR codes
throughout this
issue.



Datebook

DECEMBER

December 21 – January 3
Winter Break

PRACTICE
OPPORTUNITIES
SYMPOSIUM
APRIL 12

2024

JANUARY

January 7
CE Program

January 15
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
College/Clinic Closed

FEBRUARY

February 4
ICO and University of Chicago
Joint CE Symposium

February 16
Board of Trustees Meeting

February 24
Winter Quarter Ends

February 26
Spring Quarter Begins

MARCH

March 3
CE Program

March 18 - 21
NBEO Part 1

March 23
Eye Ball

March 29-31
Spring Break

APRIL

April 2
NBEO Part 2

April 12
Practice Opportunities
Symposium

MAY

May 4 – 11
Final Exams

May 13 - 18
Break Week

May 18
Commencement
Spring Quarter Ends

May 20
Summer Quarter Begins

May 25 - 27
Memorial Day Holiday
College/Clinic Closed



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Last Look



In the early 1980s the ICO faculty played a baseball game against the Cubs grounds keepers.