

COVD 39TH ANNUAL MEETING

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

COVD Continues Making a Difference

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Flint, MI

Dr. Habermehl gave the following speech during the Installation & Induction Banquet at the COVD 39th Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado on Saturday, October 17, 2009.

Recently, I received from the American Academy of the Ophthalmology the press release that vision therapy does not work. As advocates for our patients is it our duty to inform the hundreds and thousands of those we have helped and say to them that despite their increase in reading comprehension, despite their increase in self-esteem, despite the fact that their grades have jumped from Cs and Ds, and are now As and Bs, despite all of this, vision therapy does not work? No, of course not!

It is frustrating to see an organization like the American Academy of Ophthalmology continuously strike out at a profession like ours despite how many of their patients have been helped by doctors of COVD. The members of our organization have been challenged for years about the effectiveness of what we do. Even though there are numerous studies to support the efficacy of optometric vision therapy, criticism of vision therapy continues to be high.

So, why are we at COVD so passionate about vision therapy? Because there is nothing more rewarding in our profession of optometry than guiding a patient through the life-changing experiences of vision therapy and then getting the great honor of witnessing the dramatic improvement in the quality of that patient's life. I'm sure you've all experienced the parent crying tears of joy as their son or daughter's progress reports point out their success with vision therapy. How many more times do we have to hear, "I wish we'd found you sooner. My child wouldn't have had to suffer so long if we'd known about vision therapy sooner." How many more times do we have to hear the frustrating and distressing story from an

adult patient that had suffered for decades because they hadn't heard of optometric vision therapy and developmental optometrists when they were a child?

We have shared and collaborated on many projects with OEP. In addition, we have liaisons with: AOA, PAVE, NORA, AAO, ACBO, IFBO, ICVC, and CSO. Our intraprofessional cooperation and respect between organizations is crucial and an important component in building the optometric community. I look forward to our continued teamwork!

At this time, I'd like to thank and recognize all of our volunteers, past presidents, past and present Board members, IECB members, committee members, our state directors, writers, and our advisory board members, especially Toni Bristol who generously donates so much of her time. Please stand up and be acknowledged.

Let me tell you a story I'm sure some of you have heard before. One day, an old wise man was walking along a very large expanse of sand dunes bordering the seashore. As he walked along, he saw a young girl near the water's edge bending down, picking something up and throwing it back into the sea. As the old man drew closer, he noticed the shore was covered with starfish that had apparently washed ashore during the night and were dying on the beach.

As the old wise man watched, the young girl would take a step or two, bend down, pick up a starfish and throw it back into the sea so it would continue to live. The shore was still covered with starfish and the young girl seemed to be making no difference at all. The old man came down off the dune and inquired why the girl was wasting her time. After all, the shore was still covered with the starfish and, in his opinion, she was making no difference. The young girl didn't say anything. Instead, she took another step, picked up a starfish and threw it back into the sea. She turned to the old wise man and said, "It made a difference to that one didn't it?"

If we take the initiative of that young girl, we can and will continue making that difference for our patients. Our job as an organization is to spread the word about the efficacy of optometric vision therapy and to certify our members to provide that service. It will take each of us working together to perform that job, and it will take many more optometrists and therapists joining our organization for us to be able to make a difference to all those in need of our care.

Ladies and Gentlemen, This year, this month, this week, today... is our time.

Author Jim Vanderberg said it best...

People can be unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered – but love them anyway.

Do good for others and your motives will be suspect – but do good anyway.

Small men with big ideas can be discouraged by big men with small minds – but think big anyway.

Give the best you have to give and people will find fault – but give your best anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight by well-meaning thoughtless people – but build anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true adversaries – but succeed anyway.

Question authority and you will stand alone – but ask anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow – but please, do good anyway.

I am humbled and honored to be the new president of the dynamic and far-reaching organization, COVD. There has never been a more exciting time in the history of vision development than at this moment right now. As the world moves forward towards globalization, COVD, as an international organization, is poised to help shift the stagnant paradigms that have been in existence for so long in education. Parents are struggling, struggling to find answers for their children who are unable to read. Doctors are struggling, struggling to provide answers

to why so many seemingly healthy children are failing to succeed academically. Teachers are struggling to find ways to engage the masses of students who have given up after what seems like a lifetime of failure.

The object of any organized movement is to secure its goals. As your new president, I am establishing the goals for my term to expand the recognition of COVD and optometric vision therapy as a solution for so many who struggle and to continue making a difference in our patients' quality of life.

It was once written that: "A new idea floats in the air over the heads of the people and for a long, indefinite period evades their understanding but, by and by, when through familiarity, human vision grows clearer, it is caught out of the clouds and crystallized into law."

Such a time comes to every movement. It is my firm conviction that now is the time for COVD and for vision therapy.

It is evident our organization is already experiencing an increase in recognition within our profession. This past July, your COVD Board of Directors and many other COVD members converged in Washington, DC for the Annual AOA meeting. As you are aware, history was made when the AOA House of Delegates voted in favor of establishing the American Board of Optometry (ABO) as the entity to develop and implement the framework for board certification and maintenance of certification. Your Board and many other key individuals worked diligently with the AOA to ensure COVD Fellowship certification was included as a qualifier towards general optometric board certification. A new resolution was passed placing Fellowship in COVD on par with Fellowship in the American Academy of Optometry (AAO). As a result, Fellowship in COVD is now worth 50 points toward board certification in optometry.

COVD also has new allies when it comes to tackling the job of spreading the news to the public about optometric vision therapy and its roll in helping those with learning disabilities. Dr. Susan Barry's amazing description of her journey through vision therapy has taken off around the country. Her book, *Fixing My Gaze*, has been described as a perfect blend between personal story and the scientific explanations behind vision therapy. It is simply a must read for anyone interested in vision therapy, education, neurology, or child development. Dr. Barry never misses an opportunity to tell everyone about COVD and our developmental optometrists.

Also helping us spread the word about vision therapy to the public is none other than the recent super bowl contender and NFC Champion, Larry Fitzgerald. The Arizona Cardinals' wide receiver has credited the optometric vision therapy he received as a child as one of the keys to his success on and off the football field. Fitzgerald now helps COVD in its continued quest to inform the public about vision therapy. I'm sure you all saw the many COVD August is Children's Learning & Vision Month press releases in which Mr. Fitzgerald was quoted. In addition, there have been numerous interviews Larry has done which included segments with his grandfather and aunt talking about his vision therapy.

And finally, COVD is thrilled with the recent CITT study conducted by the National Eye Institute confirming the efficacy of office-based optometric vision therapy for the treatment of convergence insufficiency. For those doctors and therapists who have been on the front line of the struggle to gain recognition of the efficacy of vision therapy, the study results do not come as a surprise. Someday, the success of vision therapy will no longer be a surprise to anyone.

Thanks to the hard work of COVD, each and every member can make the most of the positive press being generated by Susan Barry, Larry Fitzgerald, and the CITT study by using the COVD Vision Therapy

Information Kit and our many press releases tailored for individual use. Be sure to use the information available to you on our website; it's being updated almost daily. If you haven't joined the COVD, Facebook, or Sovoto groups, or read our many "Tweets" on Twitter, or helped us "Digg" a story in the media, I invite you to do so today. Help us continue making a difference.

My challenge to you is this, right now; think of one new way that you have not used before, that could be used to reach people with information about Vision Therapy. It might be setting up a Facebook account for your office, uploading a video to YouTube, or forwarding a link from COVD's Twitter page. If each person in this room takes one new step upon returning home next week, we can potentially reach tens of thousands of new parents, teachers and doctors, many of whom are searching for answers for someone who struggles.

Some might think that this goal is too lofty and that we can never reach every child who needs our help. But thinking back to the girl on the beach, we realize that it will make all the difference to the ones we do reach. For those children, we will have achieved our goal.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity of leading this great organization called the College of Optometrists in Vision and Development.

COVD 39TH AM AWARD RECIPIENTS

A. M. Skeffington Award

Dominick M. Maino, OD, FCOVD-A

G. N. Getman Award

Nancy G. Torgerson, OD, FCOVD

COVD of the Year Award

Kathy Rutland, COVD

Distinguished Service Award

Leonard J. Press, OD, FCOVD

President's Award

Lynn F. Hellerstein, OD, FCOVD

OVD 2008 Best Article Award

John D. Tassinari, OD, FCOVD

Assessing the Assessment: Learning Related Vision Problems Test Scores Revisited

Making Vision Therapy Visible Award

Susan R. Barry, PhD

Larry Fitzgerald

Congratulations!