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Save Your Vision Week, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Vision is a priceless gift that enriches our lives in countless ways. Through our eyes we drink in the beauties of art and nature. Reading offers us a window on the world—present and past. The ability to see is something we tend to take for granted until it is threatened by disease or injury. But there are steps all of us can take now to protect the gift of sight.

One of the most important precautions is regular eye examinations by an eye care professional. Such checkups can alert us to the early stages of an eye disease that, if unchecked, could cause irreparable loss of sight. Thanks to research, eye doctors now have effective treatments for some of the most sight-threatening eye diseases.

For example, research supported by the National Eye Institute has shown that laser treatment can help many people who are at risk of visual loss from diabetic eye disease. It is essential for people with diabetes to have regular eye examinations to learn whether they need this treatment.

Regular eye checkups are also important for people who have reached middle age, because glaucoma, cataract, macular disease, and many other serious eye disorders tend to strike in middle and later life. But if these conditions are detected and treated in time, serious visual loss often can be prevented.

Children, too, stand to benefit from eye examinations. A routine checkup may reveal some problem that should be corrected while the child is still young. Many children have been spared from lifelong visual handicaps because a checkup gave warning of a need for treatment.

Preventing eye injuries is also very important. Everyone should wear goggles, safety glasses, or a face mask when working with chemicals or machinery that might be a hazard to the eyes. People participating in certain sports may also benefit from protective eyewear.

And there is more we can do. We can give the gift of sight to others by making arrangements to donate our eyes after death. Donations are needed for corneal transplant operations that can cure blindness in people whose corneas have been damaged by injury or disease. It is hard to imagine a more magnanimous bequest.

This is a time to recognize the many contributions of private organizations devoted to the safeguarding of eyesight, the prevention of visual loss, and the rehabilitation of those with impaired vision. During this centennial year of the National Institutes of Health, we can also celebrate the many research accomplishments of the National Eye Institute.

To encourage all Americans to reflect on how important eyesight is and what they can do to safeguard it, the Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 629, 36 U.S.C. 169a), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning March 1, 1987, as Save Your Vision Week. I urge all Americans to participate in this observance by making eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives. I invite eye care professionals, the communications media, and all public and private organizations committed to the goal of sight conservation to join in activities that will make Americans more aware of the steps they can take to protect their vision.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan