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Staying Close to **Her Roots**

Dr. Nicole Rush Erenfeld
finds she can make a
big impact close to home

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OF OPTOMETRY



Take Action with Education

Looking beyond what she could do in her own practice, OD impacts community and state

Ruthie Ruan, OD, of Oklahoma City, is always looking at the bigger picture. It's that mindset that often turns one patient into a whole family of long-time patients. Her dedication to her patients and their health doesn't go unnoticed, and patients show their appreciation by extending her invitations to their weddings and graduations. Even the practice name—Circle of Life Eyecare Center—represents the mission.

About three years ago, Dr. Ruan says, "I noticed that many children had vision problems, many of which could be detected and treated early if they had their eyes examined regularly." She found that both parents and students were confused about the difference between a vision screening and an eye exam.

The Putnam City school district health department was very supportive of Dr. Ruan's efforts to promote comprehensive eye exams for children. Together with the Oklahoma

Association of Optometric Physicians (OAOP) and the School Nurse Organization of Oklahoma, Dr. Ruan began to educate parents and school nurses and aides on the differences between a vision screening and an eye exam and the common signs of eye problems. As a result, the program has nearly doubled the number of students who received an eye exam in 2012 compared to 2011.

In 2012, Dr. Ruan was a Healthy Eyes Healthy People® (HEHP) grant recipient from the American Optometric Association Foundation. With the support of the OAOP, she has reached close to 10,000 students, from pre-K through fifth grade, and their families. Dr. Ruan and **Sandra Naifeh**, OAOP executive director, also attended the SUCCESS for Life Symposium, a program held by the Oklahoma University Child Study Center for local communities and organizations to collaborate on facilitating a comprehensive, unified system of health, social and educational

services for Oklahoma children. As they spread the word about their own work, it was a tremendous opportunity to network and form collaborations with state legislative and health care authorities, health care experts and local organization leaders. Sharing concerns and opinions with these individuals helps facilitate the long-term success that their efforts have.

Dr. Ruan's interest in community health is a family legacy, in a way. Her father, a surgeon, served in medical care shortage areas in Africa for four years. Her mother, a medical school professor, taught her the value of family, integrity, respect and hard work. "Her kindness and love for people have always been an inspiration to me," she says.

Back in her office, Dr. Ruan receives phone calls from other doctors who want to create greater awareness with parents and students. She's pleased with the increasing attention to children's eye health. "I believe children in our state will benefit most when more eye care professionals become actively involved in this endeavor," she says. **WO**



Dr. Ruan

Practice Grows as Reputation Builds

Dr. Ruthie Ruan was working as a medical researcher and had a 1-year-old son when she decided to go back to school to earn her optometry degree. While her family was in Oklahoma, she completed the Accelerated Optometric Degree Program at New England College of Optometry, a 27-month degree program for individuals who already have postgraduate training (she

earned medical degrees in China). She returned to Oklahoma to practice in a group setting, but she discovered she wanted to start her own practice. It took just about a year to find the spot in a fast-growing area near Oklahoma City—a small office with big potential—inside a newly constructed business center. Dr. Ruan and her husband worked together on everything from construction bids to office design and frame display assembly, and friends lent their expertise to assist with IT services, financial planning, business management and legal consultation.

She opened her doors in early 2007 with full electronic health records and recently added an online appointment

scheduling system. She's working on offering online patient registration. She follows trends in technology and treatment options. She added the ICARE tonometer early, promotes the office as a dry eye treatment center and expects her next investment to be a TearLab osmolarity system.

Her efforts have paid off. She now works full time, and her



The Circle of Life team is ready to provide eye care services to school children.

staff has grown from one to five members. She's also thinking about its future—expanding the office with double the exam rooms and more space for special testing and an in-office finishing lab. "It is my hope that my office can offer a platform for those who love optometry," she says. She employs optometry school students over the summer and allows high school and college students to shadow her. "I always encourage them to take the opportunity and challenge to grow personally and professionally," Dr. Ruan says. "A few of my staff have set up goals to become an optometrist or other professional. I am very proud of them." **WO**