

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

“STUDENTS SEE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE”

In 2003, students in the Optical Science program at Brown Mackie College — Cincinnati began working with Prevent Blindness Ohio, a volunteer vision health and safety organization serving all 88 counties in Ohio. The students were able to interact with the community by providing free visual testing in elementary schools and at local city functions.

Stemming from this relationship, the college's Optical Science and Medical Assisting students participated for the first time in Prevent Blindness Ohio's 7th annual “Light the Night for Sight Walkathon” during the summer of 2004. The walk raised money for programs that educate the public on the dangers of fireworks (just in time for July 4th), early detection of childhood visual disorders, and programs that provide affordable eye care for low-income individuals. Even though the Optical Science students spearheaded the project, it became a school-wide effort, embracing the support of many faculty, staff, and students at Brown Mackie College — Cincinnati.



Prevent Blindness Ohio's 7th annual "Light the Night for Sight Walkathon," Summer 2004

Without a doubt, events like the walkathon benefit those in need of affordable healthcare and help spread important messages about optical care. But being involved in community projects also helps enrich the education and future professional lives of the school's Optical Science and Medical Assisting students.

“I want to be involved in school community projects so I can be a stepping stone for someone less fortunate, and the walkathon is the perfect start,” says Constance Amy, a first-year student at Brown Mackie College — Cincinnati. “I hope to be that guardian angel for people who are looking for someone to show them how to take that first step toward believing that not all is lost and that we as a school care about our community and their needs.”

In such an environment, students learn how to take the technical knowledge they have acquired in the classroom and apply it to real-life scenarios, explains Florine Postell, the southwest Ohio chapter director of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “The students participate in screenings, observe opticians, and experience the benefits of touching patients' lives beyond making contact calls and doing paperwork. We're happy to have found an Optical Science program in the area — one with which we can collaborate and help each other out.”

Tammy Klette, co-chairperson of the Allied Health department at Brown Mackie College — Cincinnati, agrees: “I want our students to be proud that they received their education from Brown Mackie College, in addition to showing the businesses in our community that we are proactive.

About 60 students, faculty, and staff participated in the walkathon. Amy Dewald, a second-year student in the Medical Assisting program and president of the evening Medical Club, says, “We're excited about an opportunity to participate in

something that is worthwhile, while also building unity within our Optical Science club.” Laura Waites, a first-year Optical Science student, agrees: “Getting involved in a positive community project like this is like being a candle in a dim world. And it helps broaden my people skills while working with the community.”

“The world is full of those who see problems happening around them but expect everyone else to get involved and solve them,” says Klette. “Brown Mackie College — Cincinnati wants our students to be part of the solution and not part of the ignorance. Education is a powerful tool and we should empower our students to use it.”

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