

Tega Cay and Fort Mill Lions Coordinate Vision Screenings

"Local Lions Clubs hope early detection can help lower the number of Fort Mill students who struggle with vision problems", said Hope MacBride, program coordinator for the Tega Cay Lions.

"The Tega Cay Lions, working in conjunction with the Fort Mill Lions, raised \$9,000 to purchase a SPOT Welch Allyn vision screening device, a sophisticated diagnostic instrument that quickly and accurately screens eyesight across all age groups", MacBride said.

"Through various community fundraisers and a \$4,000 Springs Close Foundation grant, the Lions purchased the unit in May and have trained members on how to use it", MacBride



continued. "We're anxious to get out there and get started," she said.

"The device cost \$7,000 and the rest of the funds raised will help the Lions provide eye exams and glasses for those that qualify", MacBride said. The Lions hope to raise \$2,000 a year to maintain the SPOT unit and continue to provide exams.

The SPOT device, now provided by Welch Allyn, a leading global manufacturer of medical diagnostic equipment, detects major vision issues, such as astigmatism, nearsightedness and farsightedness, according to the Welch Allyn website.

"Since the device is used similarly to a camera and requires no participation on the part of the patient, unlike the traditional Snellen eye chart method, it eliminates

any chance of the patient memorizing a chart or cheating in any way", said Dr. Larry Jerge of Tega Cay Eye Care. "It can also be used on children as young as 6 months old." "The traditional method often detects vision issues when they are already progressed", Jerge said. "And early detection is critical to avoid vision problems later in life", he said.

"If early dental care is important, why not eye care too?" Jerge said.

"The device also reduces the work load for nurses, who have to screen every student", Jerge said. "The eventual goal, he said, is to screen each Fort Mill student every year".

"The Fort Mill School District currently has close to 12,300 students", district spokeswoman Kelly McKinney said. "The Lions hope to soon start screening students in Fort Mill, as well as children in day care centers", MacBride said.

"We're excited," MacBride said. "To catch children before they even start school would be great."

(Accompanying Photo: Tega Cay Lions' member Hope MacBride screens Harper Gore, 3, with the SPOT Welch Allyn vision screening device to test her vision)