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**Lions World Vision Institute Advances Accessible Care with Vision Health Center
Groundbreaking in Ybor City**

New 30,000-square-foot pediatric-focused facility builds the region's reputation as a national leader in innovative, community-centered vision healthcare

TAMPA, Fla. (December 19, 2025) — [Lions World Vision Institute](#) (LWVI) today marked a major milestone in its mission to expand equitable access to vision care by breaking ground on its new **\$16 million Vision Health Center** in Tampa's historic Ybor City. The 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility is designed to address one of the region's most pressing and often overlooked healthcare challenges: access to comprehensive vision care for uninsured and underinsured children and families.

The Vision Health Center is expected to open in 2027 and will serve **more than 23,000 children annually**, bringing screenings, diagnostics, medical eye exams, treatment, glasses, follow-up care, education and research together under one roof. The center builds on LWVI's long-standing mobile and school-based programs while filling critical gaps that prevent many children from receiving ongoing medical-level eye care.

"This groundbreaking represents far more than the start of construction — it reflects a long-term commitment to reimagining how vision care is delivered in our community," said **Jason Woody, president and CEO of Lions World Vision Institute**. "For years, we've met children where they are through mobile clinics and school screenings. The Vision Health Center allows us to take the next step by creating a permanent, accessible destination where kids can receive continuous, high-quality care that supports learning, health and opportunity."

With early support from the **Glazer Vision Foundation** beginning in 2019, LWVI expanded mobile vision services across the community, helping identify significant gaps in pediatric eye care and the need for accessible, neighborhood-based solutions. That work laid the foundation for the Vision Health Center, which will include dedicated space for ophthalmologist training, research collaboration, surgical readiness and expanded community education, strengthening the region's vision health ecosystem.

LWVI expects the Vision Health Center to serve as a **national model** for accessible, pediatric-focused vision care — demonstrating how nonprofit innovation, research and community partnerships can close long-standing gaps in healthcare access.

"For families who have faced long wait times, transportation challenges or cost barriers, this center changes what's possible," said **Mike Griffin, LWVI board chair**. "The Vision Health Center represents an innovative approach to vision healthcare — one that brings medical care, research, education and community impact together to ensure children in our region don't fall through the cracks simply because they can't access care."

Community leaders and partners joined LWVI leadership at the groundbreaking ceremony, underscoring the broad support behind the project and its impact on youth, families and

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neighborhoods across Tampa Bay. Speakers included Jason Woody, president and CEO of LWVI; Mike Griffin, board chair of LWVI; U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis; U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor; Tampa Mayor Jane Castor; Hillsborough County Commissioner Ken Hagan; Hillsborough County Councilwoman Naya Young; and Jamal Jefferson from Tampa Parks and Recreation.

Addressing a Critical Community Need

The need for expanded pediatric vision services in Hillsborough County is urgent. Only 53 percent of third graders read proficiently, a challenge often linked to undiagnosed or untreated vision issues. Studies show that up to one in four school-aged children may have a vision problem that interferes with learning, while nearly 45 percent of local families are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), facing significant barriers to consistent healthcare access.

In the 2024-25 school year alone, LWVI's mobile vision program delivered:

- **6,117 vision screenings**
- **2,294 eye exams**
- **2,267 pairs of prescription glasses**
- **897 first-time glasses wearers**
- **182 school-based clinics**

Approximately **15% of students** screened require medical-level exams for conditions such as amblyopia (lazy eye) and strabismus (eye misalignment) — conditions that demand ongoing treatment beyond the scope of mobile services.

About Lions World Vision Institute

Lions World Vision Institute is a nonprofit organization committed to honoring vision as a basic human right. Our work extends around the globe, and includes donor family and recipient support, advanced tissue preparation for transplant cases, innovative research and technology development, eye bank and surgeon training programs, pediatric vision services, and community-based education in local and international communities for those who are visually impaired.

With our worldwide ecosystem of eye banks, surgeons and research leaders, we work tirelessly to honor a donor's gift by protecting and supporting sight restoration for hundreds of thousands of people — transforming lives around the world... so the world can see. For more information about Lions World Vision Institute, please visit www.LWVI.org.

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