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**Prevent Blindness and the National Black Church Initiative
Team Up to Address Vision and Eye Health**

***-New “Community InSight” Program Designed to Educate Public on Issues
Related to Eye Health and Increase Number of Eye Exams-***

CHICAGO (Feb. 26, 2015) – Prevent Blindness, the nation’s oldest volunteer eye health organization and the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches across 15 denominations, are announcing today that they are joining forces to improve the vision and eye health of the coalition’s 15.7 million African American churchgoers.

African Americans have among the highest risks for developing eye health issues, suffering disproportionately from conditions such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy when compared to other ethnicities. According to a recent national [public opinion poll](#), when asked which disease or ailment is the worst that could happen to them, blindness ranked first among African Americans.

The 2014 Prevent Blindness “[Future of Vision: Forecasting the Prevalence and Costs of Vision Problems](#)” report projected that by 2050 most glaucoma patients will be non-white. At that time, blacks and Hispanics will each constitute about 20 percent of all glaucoma patients. According to the [National Eye Institute](#), blindness from glaucoma is six times as common in blacks as in whites. Further, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), African American adults are twice as likely as non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes and its related complications including diabetic eye disease.

To address these skyrocketing numbers, the groups joined forces and created the “Community InSight” program, designed to educate and equip designated Health Navigators within each of the NBCI congregations to serve as peer-to-peer eye health educators in order to:

- 1) Increase awareness of eye health among NBCI member church congregations and parishioners, with an emphasis on diabetic eye disease and glaucoma, and
- 2) Increase the number of annual dilated eye exams for parishioners living with diabetes or who are at high risk for glaucoma

“Vision and eye health disparities are some of the most important yet unfortunately overlooked health concerns facing African Americans,” said Rev. Anthony Evans, NBCI President. “NBCI has long fought the battle for equal access to care and high-quality educational platforms for our congregants and their families. We are confident and excited that our partnership with Prevent Blindness will help achieve these goals and improve the health of our communities.”

Added Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness, ““The good news is that through early diagnosis and treatment, the blinding effects of glaucoma and diabetic eye disease can be lessened. What we need to do is not only educate everyone on these conditions, but also address the obvious health disparities involved and break through the barriers that so many face in accessing quality eye care. We hope this new collaboration with the NBCI will help us achieve that goal.”

For more information on the new partnership, or general glaucoma and diabetic eye disease, please visit <http://naltblackchurch.com/health/prevent-blindness.html>, or call the NBCI at (202) 744-0184 or Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates and regional offices, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

About the National Black Church Initiative

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative's methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.

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