

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment. This is Katie Johnson, and my guest today is Dave Gausted from 20/20 Optical. Good morning, Dave.

Dave Gaustad: Hey, Katie. How are you?

Katie Johnson: I am great. It has been a few months now that 20/20 Optical has been part of the Lake Region Healthcare family, but Sports Eye Safety Month is what brought you to the top of my list today, to both talk about 20/20 and the topic of Sports Eye Safety Month. Let's start with the topic of 20/20 joining the Lake Region Healthcare family team. You're not a new business by any means, and not even new to our campus. Tell us a little bit about 20/20's history.

Dave Gaustad: Well, we are excited to be part of Lake Region Healthcare. It's been 30 years since I moved my family up here to Fergus Falls from Minneapolis and worked for Benson Optical for about 10 years, and 1986 20/20 Optical was formed. Had a great time with that and lots of great customers, great employees. Now, with the new clinic here in town, the time was very good for us to join the Lake Region Healthcare group, and we're excited to be part of it. It's proven to be a very fun, exciting, new opportunity for us all.

Katie Johnson: You have a beautiful new space in the clinic. That's got to be something that's been fun to have the expanded space, give you room for more inventory and that direct channel into the eye clinic.

Dave Gaustad: You know, during the process of building we would come over to the new facility here and put our hard hats on and walk in and take a look at our spot. Until it really comes together, I'm not that type of person that can visualize that, but it is a beautiful office. It is a much bigger area. We've got a greater inventory and expanded inventory just due to the size. It's really, really, really a nice, comfortable environment for customers to come in and look. The personal space for employees has gotten a little bit larger too, which is always a good thing.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. You mentioned your employees. You have a great staff with some really impressive credentials and experience, too.

Dave Gaustad: You know, we do. I've been in the eye care industry now for, oh, 32 years. Amy Donoho has been in the eye care industry for 28 years, working with us for 20-plus years. Nina [Beecker 00:02:49] has been with us now just recently. She is an ABO-certified optician that's got 15 years of experience. We have Lisa Hart, who is a relatively new employee, that's doing great. Michele Peterson has been a very nice addition. Doreen Saurer, she actually has more experience in the eye care industry than I do. Yeah, it's a really great team. Adding it up, it's a hundred-plus years of eye care experience, which really is, in today's workplace, quite an accomplishment.

Katie Johnson: It is. That's pretty unusual. Kids and student athletes have always been a really integral part of your business. It's partly just who you are and what's important to

you and your family, and that certainly shows in how you have made kids and athletes a focus of your service line. Because it is Sports Eye Safety Month, I wanted to talk about that and how prevalent of an issue this is in your opinion.

Dave Gaustad: Well, raising five kids in the Fergus Falls area and the school systems and all the activities that my kids have been and were involved in, I think it is very important for parents and coaches and athletes, student athletes, to at least take a look at or consider or think about issue of safety eyewear or those kinds of things. We wear all kinds of other safety things. Example: in softball now I know that girls, pitchers, actually the whole infield are wearing more cages to prevent balls hitting them in the nose. I think it probably wouldn't be a bad idea for baseball to do that. I know that there are some baseball college teams actually that put a face mask-type guard on their helmets when they're batting to keep them from backing out or getting hit.

Yeah, I think it's very important. Today, now, the frames, the glasses, the sports glasses that are available are way different than years ago, offering great protection but with a little more style to them.

Katie Johnson: Right. It's maybe not what you think of or picture in your mind when you think about protective eyewear. You have a personal story with your son makes this even more close to your heart.

Dave Gaustad: Yeah. Our oldest son, Mike, he's 30 now so it's been a few years, but [inaudible 00:05:45] was playing in the state high school baseball tournament in his last game. He took a ball off his bat and hit him right in the eye and caused some pretty good damage. Thankfully, Dr. [Schmidt 00:05:58] here, one of the eye doctors, was able to follow up with him. Yeah, Mike broke his nose and broke his sinus cavity and got 20 stitches on his right eye. It was a pretty serious injury. He still probably would have gotten some injuries, but he wore contact lenses, and if he would've had some type of eye protection on, I'm 100% confident that that would've made a big difference on his injury. That was in May. It took him almost 2 months to really come out of that.

I think it's important for the sports eyewear programs that we have. Whether your kids need a prescription or they wear contact lenses, either way we can protect your eyes. Because there can be some fingernails to the eye in basketball. Of course, baseball, softball, there are some injuries that can really be serious if your eyes aren't protected.

Katie Johnson: We talk about best practices of wearing that protective eyewear. One of the biggest challenges, though, I think, is getting the kids to wear it.

Dave Gaustad: That would be correct. Again, nowadays the styles and stuff, there's more to choose from. There are better quality, better optics in the lenses. That is a challenge, is to get the kids to actually put them on. Unfortunately, I think right now it is, if you've incurred an injury, then it's put on. It's kind of after the fact. I

know Oakley has some OSHA-rated sunglasses that some baseball players do wear that would be a protection of some sort. It's an important issue, I believe.

Katie Johnson: It is, and hopefully we can get, like you said, parents, coaches, and athletes all to start thinking a little bit more proactively and preventively about that, because permanent eye damage is certainly not something anyone wants to be thinking about, or even, in the case of your son, the long-term repercussions that might be a result.

Dave Gaustad: That's just it. I have seen an adult guy get a fingernail playing fat man's basketball at the Y. Long-term effects of that are long-term. My son Mike we've been told probably will have an injury-related cataract well before his time. With an eye injury, you might be taken out of your sport for who knows how long. A little bit of prevention might go a long ways. You don't hear a lot of eye injuries. For kids that wear contact lenses, it protects that on a rainy night in a football game, or, I know a lot of teams are now playing on turf, but if you're on grass, stuff is kicked up, preventing an eye injury or just keeping junk out of your contact lenses. They're strapped on, so they're geared and made to fit under helmets. I think it's an important issue that we should look at.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned the improved style, improved technology. The Vision Expo is the big eye show for the year happening now in April. You expect some new and exciting things coming out either in protective eyewear or eyewear in general from the show?

Dave Gaustad: There are two big Vision Expo shows in the eye care industry every year. One's in Las Vegas in September, and really the big one is out in New York City, Vision Expo East. That is really where all the frame manufacturers worldwide come and showcase their new frame styles. In the eye care industry, this is kind of January 1st.

Katie Johnson: Well, it's going to be exciting to see what comes out of the show. We invite everyone to come into 20/20 in the lobby of the new Lake Region Healthcare Clinic, see what they might have for new and innovative protective eyewear for student and adult athletes as we talk about Sports Eye Safety Month and if you haven't had the chance yet just to stop in and check out the new digs for 20/20 and welcome Dave and his staff to their new space and to Lake Region Healthcare.

Dave Gaustad: Yeah. We're excited to be part of it, and we do invite everybody to come on in and see our new office.

Katie Johnson: Awesome. Dave Gausted, 20/20 Optical, my guest this morning on Apple a Day during Sports Eye Safety Month. There is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.