

Solinsky EyeCare, West Hartford, Connecticut

Mitzvah Medicine

John Ciccone

A good deed performed out of religious duty or a generous heart

“P”eople are basically good and with a little guidance the impulse to care for others can be sparked,” said Alan Solinsky, MD, medical director of Solinsky EyeCare in West Hartford, Conn.

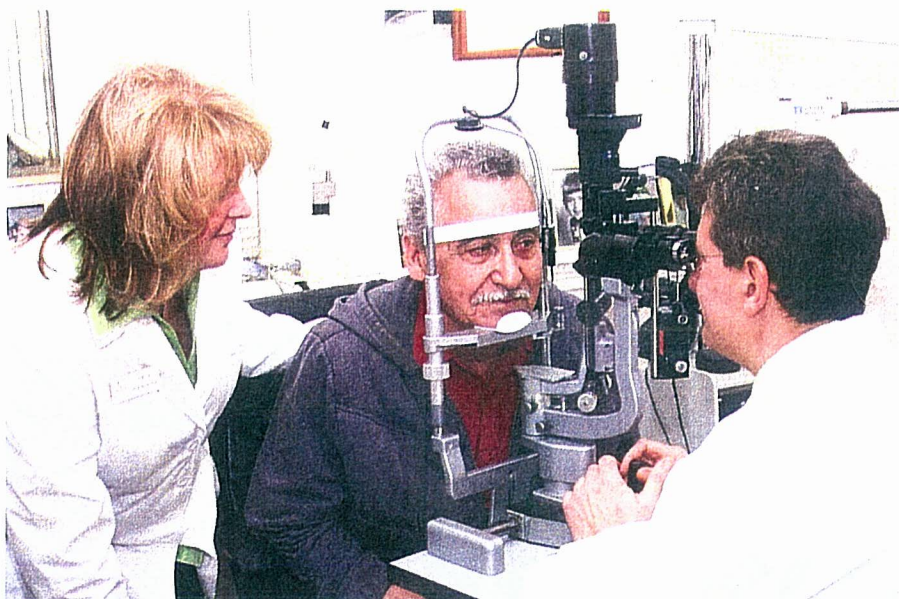
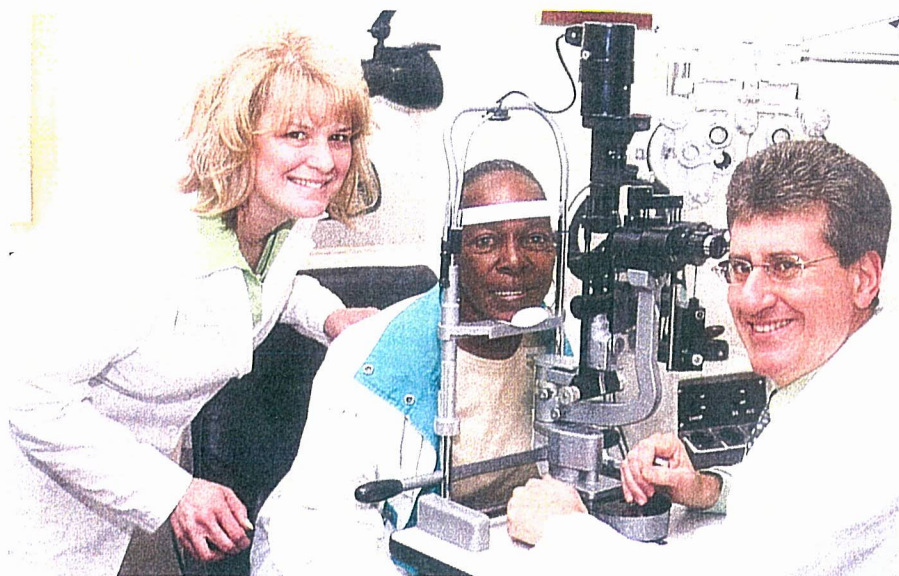
The practice uses an ophthalmology-led, integrated eyecare model that delivers comprehensive eyecare, glaucoma management, cataract surgery, and optical services to a diverse patient population. “We aim to care for the medical, surgical, and routine eyecare problems of all adults and children,” Dr. Solinsky said.

“West Hartford is a beautiful suburban community,” Dr. Solinsky said. “Our ‘mission work’ is done only 10 minutes away in Hartford’s inner city, which has many underprivileged Medicaid and uninsured patients.” These people constitute a third of the practice’s 30,000 patient visits each year.

“The practice is deeply committed to community service,” said practice manager Carra Zukowski, COA. “We are one of the few ophthalmology practices that continues to accept Medicaid. In fact, we’re on all of the insurance panels. Clinics know they can refer patients to us and patients know we will be able to see them. If patients are in pain or have decreased vision and they can’t pay, our philosophy is, ‘See them first, figure out the money later.’”

“The surgery center we work with is very cooperative in regard to charitable cases, especially for glaucoma laser procedures, which are often done at no charge to the patient,” Zukowski said, adding, “On many occasions we end up paying for patients’ cab fare.”

Another way the practice gives back to the community is through the Gift of Sight Program. “On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, we arrange for approximately 15





To further its ability to help the community, Solinsky EyeCare has branched out. The practice has 11 satellite locations (including nursing homes) in the greater Hartford area, where the practice's optometrists serve the underprivileged. "We began the practice in 1992 and in the ensuing years, Hartford saw ophthalmic practices flee to the suburbs and we were becoming overwhelmed. We felt we had a responsibility to serve the whole community. In response, we donated equipment to several clinics and hired bilingual optometrists to staff them." Dr. Solinsky is seeking other ophthalmologists to join his practice in a continued effort to aid these underserved people.

Solinsky EyeCare also reaches out beyond its locale. "When there is a disaster, we try to help," Zukowski said. "Dr. Solinsky is involved with the Solomon Schechter School, and one of the teachers was baking brownies to raise money for Haiti. Our practice donated \$1,000 for 40 trays of brownies. One of our Haitian patients remarked, 'You can pay a doctor to GIVE care, but you can't pay a doctor TO care.'"

Whether it's helping the local population get the eyecare they need or helping a community many miles away, Zukowski said of Solinsky EyeCare, "We try to do the very best we can and always look forward to doing our next good deed." **AE**

patients to receive free or low-cost eye surgery," Zukowski said. "We do follow-ups with patients on Thanksgiving Day and staff members volunteer to come into the office to assist."

"Our charitable work has a very good effect on our staff," Zukowski said. "Once a month, staff members donate \$5 to wear jeans for a day. We typically raise about \$150 and Dr. Solinsky doubles or triples the

donation." Staff members get to choose their favorite charities. "I chose breast cancer because a family member of mine was stricken with it," she said. "We have also donated to funds for ALS, kidney and heart disease, food pantries, homeless shelters, Best Buddies, Boundless Playgrounds, and Fidelco, among others."



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