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Sight Savers America Awarded \$100,000 Grant by Verizon Foundation for its KidCheck, School-Based Rural Healthcare Program

Grant to Utilize Wireless Technology to Improve Health Screenings and Follow-Up Treatments for Alabama K-12 School Children

MONTGOMERY – The Sight Savers America, an Alabama-based nonprofit, received a \$100,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to expand the use of wireless technology for our award-winning KidCheck Program. Executives from the Verizon Foundation presented the check to the Sight Savers America KidCheck Program this morning at a news conference with Governor Robert Bentley, House Speaker Mike Hubbard, and Dr. Joe Morton, Alabama State School Superintendent.

Jeff Haddox, CEO of Sight Savers, said “This grant will be used to expand the wireless tracking method to at least ten school systems and to link the KidCheck health screening database in real time with the Sight Savers database.”

Jeff Mango, president – Georgia/Alabama Region of Verizon Wireless, said the grant has the potential to impact the lives of over 16,000 Alabama students, particularly in rural areas of Alabama.” “We see the exciting potential of technology to help address disparities in the access to quality healthcare in rural areas,” Mango said. “Verizon is proud to be able to help Sight Savers build on the initial success of KidCheck. Supporting programs that use technology to improve healthcare access is among Verizon’s top priorities.”

“In the past, KidCheck used a manual screening process leaving school nurses with the daunting task of going through a stack of paperwork, reaching out to parents and sending follow-up paperwork to Sight Savers and various healthcare providers,” Haddox said. “This often took months which slowed down the coordination of necessary follow-up care for the children.”

The Verizon Foundation grant will fund the hardware and software needed to make the KidCheck screening process completely paperless. It will utilize swipe card technology using laptops, netbook computers, and scanners. This grant will fund a central information repository so that data can be kept electronically. Additionally, the grant will fund the training of this new technology for participating college nursing school faculty and students who administer the KidCheck screenings. To date, KidCheck has been implemented in 43 Alabama school systems in conjunction with over 20 Alabama two and four year college nursing schools. During KidCheck, a school gym is set up with 8-10 screening stations including height & weight, BMI, temperature, blood pressure, heart &

respiratory rates, vision & dental screenings, along with eye, ears, nose, and throat exams. Sight Savers provides case managed follow-up care for children failing a KidCheck vision screening.

“Sight Savers intends to use this grant to take KidCheck to a whole new level and to build an unmatched healthcare network for children in need that will set the bar for other states,” Haddox said. “Verizon is making it possible for Alabama to lead the nation in preventative health screenings in our schools.” “Sight Savers has a proven track record of case managing vision follow-up and our ultimate goal for our KidCheck Program is to bring case managed follow-up to other important follow-up components and this grant is an important step in that direction.”

KidCheck became a department of Sight Savers America in February. KidCheck was initially launched by Governor Bob Riley in 2008 as a state program and was led by the Alabama Rural Action Commission with the strong support of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). The Sight Savers America KidCheck Program has continued strategic partnerships with Governor Robert Bentley’s Administration included various state agencies including ALSDE, ADPH, ALL Kids, Medicaid, and the Alabama Rural Development Office.

In 2009, KidCheck was named Alabama’s Most Innovative State Program by the Auburn University Montgomery (AUM) Center for Government. In 2011, the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) cited KidCheck as a measurable program that should be supported to in order to contain long-term healthcare costs.

Sight Savers is a Birmingham-based non-profit working in eight states and reaching approximately 250,000 students. Our organization coordinates all necessary follow-up eye care services from the State Vision Program that screens every kindergarten, second grade and fourth grade public school student in Alabama. Sight Savers unique case management protocol ensures that qualifying children receive free follow-up eye care treatment including eye glasses, vision aids and even necessary eye surgery.

For more information on the Sight Savers America KidCheck Program and today’s grant announcement with the Verizon Foundation, please visit our website at www.sightsaversamericakidcheck.org or contact Chad Nichols, Director of KidCheck, by calling (205) 991-4885 or by emailing cnichols@sightsaversamerica.org.