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Optical Women's Association to Honor Axelrad, Culbreth and Claxton at Special Award Event and Reception

NEW YORK – The Optical Women's Association (OWA) will honor three women—Marge Axelrad, Grady Culbreth, and Tiara Claxton— during its award event and reception on Friday, March 15, 2013, during International Vision Expo East at the prestigious Milk Gallery in New York.

"Celebrating fifteen years of the Optical Women's Association presents the perfect occasion to host a gala event to honor our award recipients, founding members and Professional Development Sponsors, all who have contributed greatly to forwarding the mission of the OWA," said Ann Englert, OWA president. "During the festivities, we're recognizing outstanding women, who have helped pave the way for the OWA and a newer member that is showing us how getting involved in the OWA today shapes the future of an association."

The 14th annual Pleiades award will be presented to Marge Axelrad, senior vice president and editorial director of the Jobson Optical Group. Axelrad was part of the OWA fifteen years ago on day one as one of its founding members. Since the beginning, Axelrad was instrumental in reaching out to the industry for involvement and sponsorships, and as part of the Program Committee, helped create programs such as the Pleiades award events. Using her journalism expertise, Axelrad helped the fledgling organization with its marketing and communication efforts, later joining the OWA's Professional Development Fund and Nominating committees. The Pleiades Award spotlights an individual who has shown a commitment to the mission of the OWA by fostering the growth of women in the industry. The Pleiades Award is named for the star cluster "The Pleiades" in the constellation of Taurus. The Pleiades is also known as the "Seven Sisters" referring to the seven brightest stars in the cluster.

The year's Pyxis award is being presented to Tiara Claxton, OWA member and sales consultant for Safilo, USA. Claxton has volunteered at numerous OWA events, recruiting new members from different segments of the industry. Claxton set up a meeting with ECPs to discuss the OWA. Claxton is also an active member of the communication committee contributing articles and conducting interviews for the OWA newsletter. The Pyxis Award is presented to an OWA member who actively participates in the organization and promotes the OWA throughout the optical industry, contributing to OWA's continuing growth. Pyxis is a constellation in the southern sky known as "The Compass." The Pyxis award winner helps set the direction, like a compass, of the organization by her actions and inspires others by her leadership. The previous Pyxis award was presented to Lorinda Fraboni from Walman Optical in 2010.

This year, the OWA is presenting its first Lifetime Achievement Award to Grady Culbreth, of Grady & Associates, Inc.. Culbreth was a working optician and a volunteer for Prevent



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Blindness before being hired by Carl Zeiss Optical. She also worked for The Vision Council and is a past president of both the AR Council and the National Academy of Opticianry. Culbreth has been a member of the OWA since its inception, serving as the organization's president for two years, creating events on the program committee for seven years, and is an active member of the membership committee. Culbreth has a passion for encouraging women to do what they want and not be afraid to try. It has been Culbreth's efforts that have seen the OWA create programs for the women in the optician segment of the industry.

OWA's annual event and networking reception is open to both OWA members and non-members. It will be held during Vision Expo East, on Friday, at the Milk Gallery. The event begins at 6:00 p.m. with a cocktail reception. The award presentation will begin at 6:45 p.m. Transportation will be available from the Javits Center, with departures at 5:45 p.m., 6:00 p.m. and 6:15 p.m.

Prior Pleiades recipients have included Shirley Platzer-Stocks, S.P.S. Association and The OpticalVisionSite.com; Christie Walker, Jobson; Danne Ventura, Essilor of America; Rene Soltis, The Vision Council; Stephanie DeLong, *Eyecare Business*; Deborah Malakoff-Castor, The Vision Council; Janet Callif, Luxottica Retail; Dana Weeks, Optical Services International; Mimi Friedfeld, ClearVision Optical; Carene Kunkler, Sight Resource; Andrea Gluck, Eyewear Designs, Inc.; Tom Styers, Essilor; and Charles 'Pat' Patterson, Walman Optical.

The OWA would like to thank our 2013 professional development fund sponsors for their generous support and belief in the OWA mission.

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