

Getting the wrong prescription

By DEANNA ROSE
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Carole Alberts struggled for five months and made 14 visits to an eye care specialist before finally obtaining the correct prescription for the new eyeglasses she needed after undergoing cataracts surgery.

The reason for the numerous inaccurate lenses, Alberts said, is that the people who made her glasses weren't licensed by the state - because they don't have to be. After her ordeal, Alberts said she wants the laws to change - and she hopes to educate others like her in the process.

Alberts, a 68-year-old Sterling Heights resident, will talk about what happened to her and what she learned during a discussion at 9:30 a.m. on May 21 at the Sterling Heights Senior Center, located on Utica Road at Dodge Park Road. "I've never done anything like this - I've never talked in front of a group like this," Alberts said.

Following her cataracts surgery in October 2006, Alberts ordered a pair of prescription eyeglasses from Henry Ford OptimEyes in January 2007. When she received the glasses, something wasn't quite right. So, adjustments were made and Alberts went back to try the spectacles on again - and again and again.

"Some of the problems that came up, I wasn't sure if it was the glasses or (my vision)," said Alberts, who has low vision of the central vein occlusion. "These were all trips to make sure the glasses were in error."

One of the things that arose each time Alberts was waiting had her wondering if the person making her eyeglasses understood how to properly fill her doctor's prescription. Alberts noticed the employees had badges that read "Optician," but she couldn't tell who had been trained.

During her speech, Alberts will chronicle each visit to the vision center, in addition to talking about what she has learned through her own research regarding the certification of opticians.

According to Henry Ford Health Systems spokesperson Maria Seyrig, some of their opticians are certified by the American Board of Opticianry and assistance is offered to other opticians - all of whom are encouraged to become certified.

An optician is the person who fills lens prescriptions that are written by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist. They are not trained for eye examinations and in Michigan are not required to be licensed through the ABO.

An optometrist, on the other hand, performs annual eye exams, treats vision problems and must be licensed, have a Doctor of Optometry degree and pass a state board examination.

Ophthalmologists diagnose and treat eye disorders, take care of medical or surgical eye care and perform eye surgeries like LASIK. They must have a Doctor of Medicine degree, a broad knowledge of general medicine and have clinical training.

Alberts has asked state Rep. Tory Rocca, R-Sterling Heights, and state Sen. Michael Switalski, D-Roseville, to aid her fight for stricter legislation. If Alberts' speech goes well, she said she will ask audience members to join her in writing letters to Rocca and Switalski that urge creating laws to require opticians be licensed in Michigan.