



# Mercy Medicine Clinic

**"I was sick and you cared for me." ~ Matthew 25:36**

## Mercy Medicine Hosts Free Diabetic Eye Screening

The special Diabetic Retinal Screening held on April 9 at Mercy Medicine Clinic was a huge success with patients coming from all corners of the Pee Dee to benefit from the free service.

Approximately 63 people were examined during the event, which was sponsored by the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, most of those during the first hours of the screening. Of that number, it was determined that about 10 percent of these people will require follow-up treatment for a condition known as diabetic retinopathy, which can lead to blindness if left unchecked.

That was the whole idea for having the diabetic retinal screening in the first place, according to Kaye Allen, executive director of Mercy Medicine Clinic. She emphasized that catching these kinds of conditions early can make all the difference between having healthy eyesight or potentially irreversible eye damage.

"Diabetes is a huge concern in South Carolina, especially here in the Pee Dee," Allen said. "This screening had

the benefit of identifying a number of patients who had no idea that their vision was at risk."

Helping oversee the retinal screening was Dr. Derek Barker, a retinal surgeon from the Columbia Eye Clinic. Barker emphasized the great importance for diabetics to take advantage of this free, painless procedure, as a measure for safeguarding their eyesight.

"A lot of diabetics don't know that they have retinal damage because their vision may still be good," he said.



**Marsha DeCarpio of the Columbia Eye Clinic conducts an eye exam during the April 9 diabetic retinal screening.**

"It's not until it starts involving central vision and by then, many times, it's too late to bring it back. By doing an early screening, we can prevent them from losing their vision if we can find it and treat it early."

"That is the key to diabetic management—treating it early before it cause complications," Barker added.

Walker Floyd, treasurer for the Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, said the organization's intent is to improve the quality of life in this region by collaborating with non-profits.

"This was our starting point, our first grant," he said. "I'm impressed. You're a great charitable organization and I'm really happy with what I'm seeing."

For its efforts, the foundation awarded Mercy Medicine Clinic with a \$10,000 grant to help it continue its mission of providing healthcare to the community, which also involves primary medical and dental care along with a pharmacy. Mercy Medicine Clinic is the only free medical clinic in South Carolina that features a retinal facility.

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