

Girl Scouts earn Vision Patch

BY HOPE PATTI
THE COAST STAR

MANASQUAN — Local Girl Scouts stopped by Shore Family Eyecare last Thursday for an educational presentation about optometry and eye health, enabling the girls to earn their Vision Awareness Patch.

Shore Family Eyecare, which comprises Drs. Maria Richman, Harvey Richman and Kathleen Kinzley, has participated in the Vision Awareness Program for three years.

Prior to the pandemic, scouts would learn all about vision health and eye exams through hands-on activities inside the office. However, the practice has had to modify the way it presents the program.

“Now in 2021, the program has been revised to reflect the best practices during the COVID pandemic,” said Dr. Maria Richman.

“Doctors of Optometry can hold virtual troop meetings or have troop meetings outside their office respecting social distancing and wearing masks.”

No matter how the program is presented, Dr. Richman said, the scouts are still able to learn about an important topic and earn their patch.

“Doctors of optometry know more than anyone that clear and comfortable vision is imperative to help ensure a child’s ability to learn, which can only be assessed through a comprehensive eye exam,” Dr. Richman said.

“This outreach drives awareness of the importance of good eye health and proper vision care. It is also an op-



COURTESY OF MARIA RICHMAN

Girl Scouts took a trip to Shore Family Eyecare last week to earn their Vision Awareness Patch.

portunity to introduce to the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics [STEM], and maybe even the profession of optometry.”

ABOUT THE VISION AWARENESS PROGRAM

Marietta Richman, Maria and Harvey Richman’s daughter, came up with the idea for the Vision Awareness Program which was formally launched in 2018.

Marietta is a college student pursuing a career in optometry, as well as a lifelong Girl Scout and recipient of the Girl Scout gold and silver awards. She also received the American Optometric Association Paraoptometric Com-

munity Service Award in 2019 for her program.

She developed the idea with the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians and the Richard J. Favreau Health Foundation as a way to give back to the scouts as well as bridge together two of her passions — optometry and the Girl Scouts.

Dr. Maria Richman said the program “was launched in New Jersey to help doctors of optometry reach out to the Girl Scouts in their communities.”

Dr. Richman said that thousands of scouts have earned their Vision Awareness Patch since the inception of the program, which is currently active in more than 25 states.

She added that the program enables participating optometrists across the country “to reinforce the importance of eye exams to not just the children, but to parents, caregivers and scout leaders too.”

Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of all levels are able to participate in the program and earn their Vision Awareness Patch. While the program was initially available to just Girl Scouts, Dr. Richman added that Shore Family Eyecare worked with the Liberty Science Center last year to offer Boy Scouts the program.

Hope Patti can be reached at hpatti@thecoaststar.com or 732-223-0076 Ext 49.