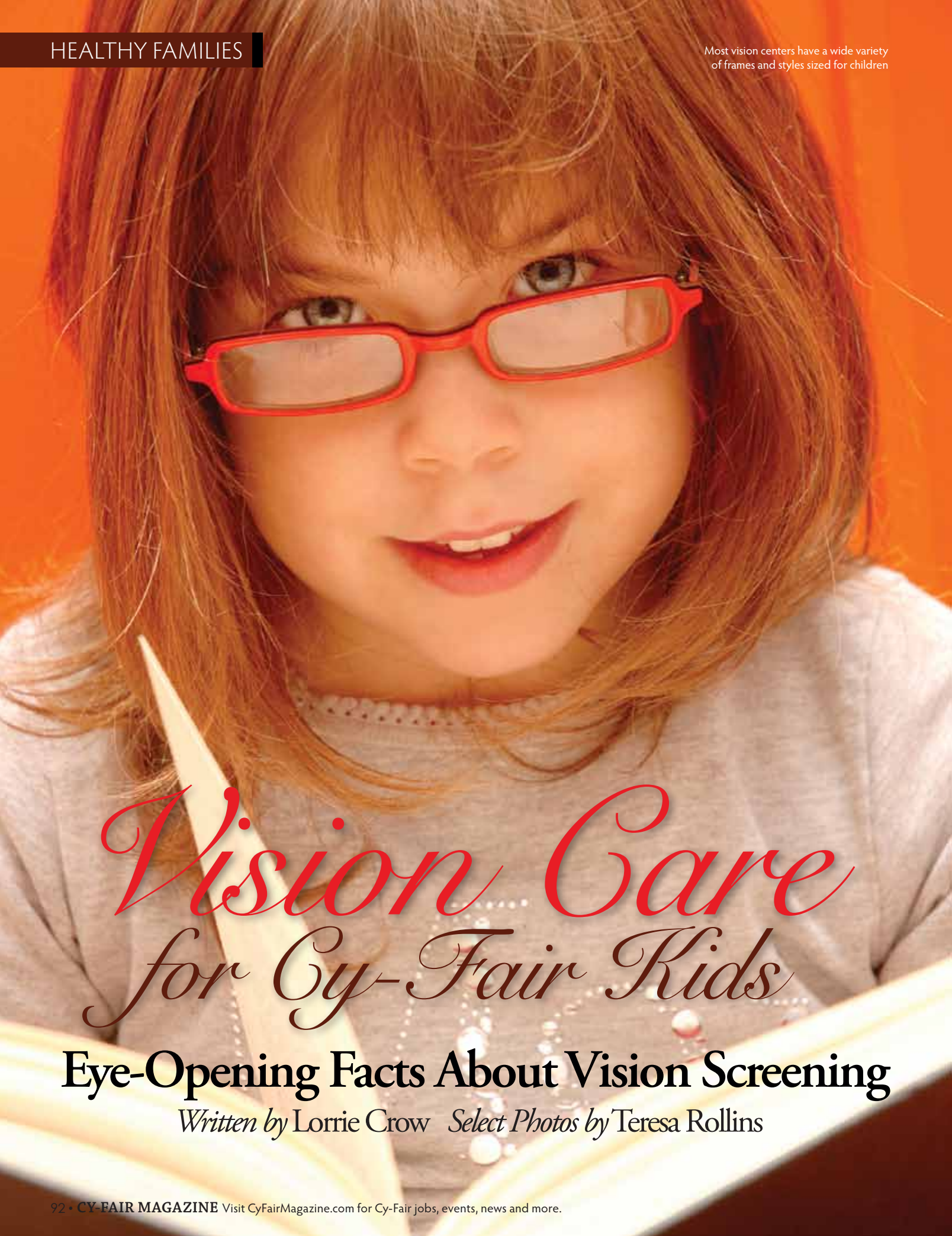

Most vision centers have a wide variety of frames and styles sized for children

Vision Care for Cy-Fair Kids

Eye-Opening Facts About Vision Screening

Written by Lorrie Crow *Select Photos by* Teresa Rollins

Although Cy-Fair schools perform vision tests, it's important that your kids see an eye doctor

Destiny Hernandez has her eyes checked annually

Everyone else in his class was reading what Peyton Madura's third-grade teacher had written on the chalkboard, but he was left squinting in his seat. When he couldn't see well enough to read it, he realized that he just might need glasses.

A school eye exam confirmed his self-diagnosis and Peyton's mother, Alana Wilkin, made his appointment at the optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam.

Dr. Jane Strong of Strong Vision Center in Cypress says she appreciates Cy-Fair I.S.D. conducting the exams. "The schools catch a lot of kids who wouldn't normally come in," Dr. Strong says. "Many parents say their kids don't have complaints at school, so they don't realize an eye exam is needed."

The Comprehensive Exam

Peyton, who is now 13 and an 8th grade student at Hamilton Junior High, was diagnosed with astigmatism and is near-sighted. He is the first in his immediate family to wear glasses at such a young age. He breezed right through his exam, although he admits that when the optometrist dilated his eyes, it wasn't that comfortable. His mother Alana prepped him before the exam so he would know what to expect, and she recommends that other parents do the same.

Dr. Katie Pham of Eye Trends in Cypress says there is now a new procedure that replaces the normal dilation process. "The optomap® retinal exam takes pictures of the back of the eye, the retina, with no drops or dilation," she says. "We keep the pictures on our system, so we have a baseline to compare with the next examination."

During a comprehensive eye exam at Eye Trends, the patient signs in and the doctor's assistant tests the eye pressure with a puff of air. The child then performs a visual field test, and the curvature of the cornea is measured, according to Dr. Pham. Then, the patient is sent to the exam room where the optometrist performs a refraction and ocular test to ensure that the eyes are working properly.

Seeing the Signs

Children should first have a routine eye exam at ages 2 to 5 to note if they are developing at proper milestones, Dr. Strong says. "If parents notice their child is favoring one eye or eye turning, they should bring the child in right away. An eye turn is normal from zero to three months, but after that, it should be checked," she says. Dr. Strong adds that her office strives to make children's visits fun. "We use pictures and matching pediatric charts." If the exam shows no problems or if there is no history of visual issues, she recommends the patient should come back in two years for a checkup.

> "Children should get an eye exam between the ages of 2 and 5."
>
> *- Dr. Strong, Strong Vision Center*

Signs that parents should watch out for with their children include squinting, headaches - particularly in afternoon hours - or lower grades, according to Dr. Strong, as these may be signs their children need an eye prescription. Once children are fitted for glasses, there are various options and styles from which to choose. Both doctors offer sports goggles, which are made to withstand impact with stronger lenses. In fact, Alana says she replaces Peyton's glasses once a year due to his involvement in sports.

Cover Your Eyes

Peyton has only lost his glasses one time, during recess, when he took them off and forgot them, he says. So, is vision insurance a

necessity for parents when their children wear glasses or contacts? Dr. Pham says it depends on each family's situation. "If there is a family history with major eye issues, most likely kids will have visual needs, so the parents should definitely get insurance," she says. "Sometimes it is maybe not worth it. Also, parents may have automatic vision insurance with their health insurance. If it is extra, then the parents should weigh the costs," she adds. "I don't have the option of insurance, but since glasses are expensive, it is a good idea," says Alana.

In the meantime, Peyton says almost half of his friends wear glasses, so no one thought it was strange when he first appeared in them. He says he knows wearing glasses is advantageous because he can now see the blackboard in school. His advice to others? "Don't be afraid that you have to wear glasses, because they are actually not bad." **CFM**

LORRIE CROW is a Cy-Fair area freelance writer and contact lens wearer.

"Many parents say their kids don't have complaints at school, so they don't realize an eye exam is needed."

- Dr. Strong, Strong Vision Center

The refraction and ocular tests are performed to ensure eyes are working properly

Eye doctors recommend kids wear glasses until they're responsible enough for contacts

Kids & Contact Lenses

Some optometrists are reluctant to prescribe contact lenses to children younger than 12, however, studies show younger children can be just as responsible about contact lens care as teens. Children in the study reported contacts were much easier to wear for sports, dancing, and other activities.

Tips for Contact Lens Success

Talk to your child's optometrist - Discuss your child's maturity, motivation to wear them, and other factors to see if he's ready.

Choose daily contacts - The risk of eye infection is lower because no re-use or maintenance is needed.

Monitor usage - Check to ensure proper hand washing and removal is taking place.

Report problems - If your child has eye redness, pain, or discharge, call your doctor.

Have eyeglasses too – In case eye infections or contacts problems arise.

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