



*Vision Source*  
SIGNATURE EYE CARE

# TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

## Cathy Doty, OD

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### Doctor Follows a Calling to Serve Children and Special Needs Patients

Until May 1, Family Eye Care was a two-location Vision Source® practice comprised of New Bern Family Eye Care and Pamlico Family Eye Care. Four doctors provided the full range of eye care services, with Cathy Doty, OD, reserving a special place in her schedule and her heart for children. The practice is one of the only InfantSEE® providers in the region. In October 2014, Dr. Doty saw a patient who caused her to rethink the business setup.

The little patient was an 18-month-old boy. His parents had to wait three months to get an appointment with Dr. Doty, as she was the only doctor in the area who sees patients that young and accepts Medicaid. "When I met this family, it was heartbreaking. The child wasn't walking or talking. The family was looking at all kinds of therapies, and you could sense the stress." She quickly found that the child was a very high hyperope, about +10.00D in each eye. "It hit me so hard that this family had to wait so long and that I had a solution that I knew would make a very big difference. I realized that pediatrics is where I need to be for the remainder of my career."



Her partners agreed that the need was there and the business plan made sense. New Bern Family Eye Care already rented a building two parking lots away, which serves as its insurance, telephone and administrative center. She spoke to the owner, an endodontist and personal friend, with her vision for a practice to serve pediatric and special needs patients exclusively. He agreed, and the work started to create Special Eyes, which opened in May 2015. "We updated the building, with new electrical and plumbing fixtures. We painted with bright colors throughout."

Just a few months after the practice opening, Dr. Doty says it's going very well. "The special needs community had no provider, and I've already examined a handful of special needs adults who have never had their eyes checked. Plus, it's fun to come into a pediatric practice. "It's bright and whimsical. We walk in and feel young every day."

Even so, it's not all fun and games. She examines foster children and has seen her share of children who have suffered damage from shaken baby syndrome. "Some of our patients make me laugh, and some break my heart," she says. Either way, she knows she plays an important role as an advocate for the children, no matter how involved their treatment plans become.

Dr. Doty still visits the Pamlico office on Wednesdays. Other than the occasional emergency adult patient, she primarily sees children in that office, too. But having a separate children's facility helps the office flow in the New Bern practice, as well. "The preliminary workup area at the primary care practice was very crowded. A lot of times when children come to an office, they come with mom, dad and a few siblings. That takes up a lot of the reception area, too."

Now, the other doctors at the primary practice have taken over her former two exam rooms, providing them and the technicians with needed breathing room. "I encourage any OD who has gotten to the point where he or she is having growing pains in the main office to look at a niche practice in a separate location," she says.

She brought her two, highly trained technicians with her to the new location. In addition, she hired a receptionist, and the administrative staff members who work in that building have stepped in to help with front desk duties there. The practice's membership in Vision Source® has also played a big role. "We have these relationships with many top-notch companies and gain the best deals on financing and equipment. As a result, I have all new equipment, and I'm thrilled. I've never had brand new equipment in my career. And we were able to acquire it at a fraction of the cost it would have been if we had to remodel and add more equipment and staff at the other location."

Because the offices are so close to each other, the partners made the decision to keep most of the children's frames in the main office. Dr. Doty maintains a selection of Medicaid-covered frames in Special Eyes, so she can measure and fit those patients right away. Others, however, are escorted by a staff member across the parking lot. A staff member from Special Eyes calls the New Bern office to let them know a patient is coming, and Dr. Doty's prescription, entered into RevolutionEHR, is printed out at the main office so that an optician is ready to assist the family. "Our dream is to have a golf cart to use to escort these patients. We plan on painting it with eyeballs and eyeglasses," she says.

While Dr. Doty is not entirely surprised by the success of Special Eyes, it's a relief anyway. "I was scared to death to step out like that, but it has ended up being such a blessing. We've gotten such support from the special needs community and area pediatricians. And we've gained new patients to the New Bern practice who are family members of our Special Eyes patients."