



Vision Source
SIGNATURE EYE CARE

TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

Dr. Tina Thomas, OD

info@thomaseyes.com

Market to Many Segments of the Community to Stay Competitive

Seventeen years after she graduated optometry school, Tina R. Thomas, OD, had the opportunity to open her own private practice. "I had always wanted to have my own private practice," she says. She and her husband, Keith Thomas, who is now her practice administrator, looked for the chance and found it five years ago.

They opened Thomas Eye Care in Washington, Illinois, about two and a half hours south of Chicago. They found that they needed to expand after just one year. Then two years ago, they bought an optical coherence tomography unit, and last year she added an Optos Daytona. "Those two purchases had made a huge impact on the practice," she says. "We held a seminar in our office for local doctors to come see the technology. We took their images so that they could understand what the technology does." At their fourth anniversary celebration open house, they offered an Optos image to visitors at no charge.

Dr. Thomas says that it's important to stay in touch with patients and physicians alike because she wants doctors and the community to think of her first when they need eye care services. There are several corporate and private practice optometric practices in town. Dr. Thomas feels that her practice stands alone because of the added personal attention that is given to each and every one of their patients.

To help other MDs in town feel confident when referring their patients to her, she plans on inviting physicians once a quarter to an educational event at her office. "They won't all be able to come to every event, but by continuing to offer them the opportunity, I can reach out to them," she says. She wants doctors to know that she has the diagnostic instrumentation and the knowledge to see their patients, and that she has the capability to see them in a timely manner.

For every patient who comes in, Dr. Thomas generates a letter to that patient's primary care physician. She uses the template that Vision Source® has provided for her patients with diabetes or glaucoma. That initiative is showing results. "When I visited an MD's office to extend the invitation to a seminar, the doctor said, 'Oh, you're the one who sends all the patient letters.' So they are noticing us," she says.

Being able to upload patients' Optos images on a flash drive – with the practice's name, website and phone – is also helping. "I had three patients in two months whom I referred to a local MD to rule out melanoma. We're also co-managing a lot of diabetes patients using Optos images for documentation."

Dr. Thomas says that she wanted to be an OD from the time she was 4. Her older sister was born with congenital cataracts, and Dr. Thomas says she wanted to help her sister and others like her.

She joined Vision Source® about four years after she opened Thomas Eye Care. While it would have been nice to enjoy the cost-of-goods savings when she first opened, she knows that she will be able to do so when she expands. There are other benefits from being part of the network, too, such as having a network of doctors she can consult with regarding changes in health care, for example, so that she can prepare and position her practice for the changes to come.



Involve the Community

Dr. Tina Thomas looks for ways to introduce herself to the community and promote good causes and programs at the same time. "We host art shows in our office, and that has been very successful. We invite the public to the after-hours opening, serve wine, cheese and crackers and let people view the art exhibits," she says. The exhibits usually stay up for two or three months before she starts another show. "We know that we have gained patients who came in because they wanted to support the artist, but they met us that way," she says.

The practice has been a sponsor of a St. Jude's Kids Run in Washington, Illinois, since it commenced. Dr. Thomas has also been working with other local businesses on back-to-school initiatives. Her goal is to fill 20 backpacks full of supplies for needy students every year. Other businesses contribute items, too. "It's nice to see businesses that support other businesses. That helps support the town," she says.