



# Vision Source<sup>®</sup> TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

## Aaron Chizek, OD, and Ammie Chizek, OD

[bett eyecare@mchsi.com](mailto:bett eyecare@mchsi.com)

### Growing Into Their Identity

When Aaron Chizek, OD, and Ammie Chizek, OD, acquired the Bettendorf, Iowa, practice where they had both been employed 12 years ago, it was already a Vision Source<sup>®</sup> practice. The young couple retained the affiliation, but they say that only more recently did they begin to appreciate what Vision Source<sup>®</sup> can do for them.

Dr. Aaron Chizek has been full-time in this practice since the two took ownership. Dr. Ammie Chizek split her time between an ophthalmology practice and this one. "It provided security and stability, but I felt like I was being torn in two. So in September 2012, I cut the cord and came to work here solely," she says. Now she works about three days a week, while he works four. That provides them time to overlap in the office and juggle the schedule to take care of their four young sons, two of whom are school-age.

Dr. Ammie Chizek's switch to complete dedication to this practice has resulted in some other changes. They brought in new equipment, such as a retinal camera and an optical coherence tomography unit. That turned out to be good planning, as an older OD in town passed away unexpectedly. Bettendorf eyecare center hired the employees from that practice and gained many of the practice's patients. This demographic was primarily older patients, so the added diagnostic equipment has enabled the doctors to retain more patients for management of glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, for example.

The practice also underwent some minor remodeling recently. This included bringing in new and fun frame lines. "When you're starting out, you're so focused on running the clinical aspect of the practice just so," says Dr. Ammie Chizek. "We were doing a very good job with providing patients with functionality, but we added more fashion-savvy lines. We had put the fun stuff on the back burner before this," she says. Both doctors say that they appreciate the savings they reap from manufacturers through their Vision Source<sup>®</sup> membership. This allows them to try different frame lines with greater confidence.

The camaraderie among their Vision Source<sup>®</sup> colleagues also provides them greater confidence. "When we go to our local meetings, we hear from other doctors who are trying programs that we may not have implemented yet," says Dr. Aaron Chizek. "That's a good way of helping us gauge how we can benefit from them, too."

Their Vision Source<sup>®</sup> colleagues are so open with information and tips, they say. "When I go to statewide CE events, it doesn't feel nearly as collegial as when I go to one of our Vision Source<sup>®</sup> meetings," she says. "I know that the doctors in the Vision Source<sup>®</sup> group would take my call or my questions and answer with helpful advice. It's a great network," she says.

Indeed, when Steve Brownmiller, OD, and Abie Chadderdon, OD, took over as co-administrators for the group, that's when Drs. Chizek and Chizek really began to notice the depth and breadth of the Vision Source<sup>®</sup> benefits. "In the early years, we really saw Vision Source<sup>®</sup> as a buying group. We probably weren't taking full advantage of the meetings, and we didn't know some of the programs," Dr. Ammie Chizek says. "But the co-administrators are very organized; they let us know when the meetings are and what the agenda is. So that makes us want to come to learn more about those agenda items."

Dr. Aaron Chizek adds that he also appreciates the way that Vision Source<sup>®</sup> is looking ahead to help ODs establish their space in the new health care reform landscape. While Bettendorf, one of the quad cities on the Iowa and Illinois border, isn't a small town, it's no major metropolis. But negotiations with accountable care organizations or third-party payors are already ongoing in bigger Iowa cities, like Des Moines. And as Vision Source<sup>®</sup> practices and the brand grows in smaller communities, there will be more opportunities for similar negotiations. In the beginning we were Vision Source, but even as the doctors we weren't really sure what it was. Now we've grown into it," says Dr. Ammie Chizek -- just like they're growing into their identity as a growing, successful practice.



### Tapping Into the Experience

As part of the growth goal for their practice, the doctors plan to do some updating to the office space this year—minimal remodeling and upgrading the flooring, for example. But their five-year plan includes investigating the option of buying a building, rather than continuing their lease. They have already had some discussions with Vision Source<sup>®</sup> District Business Development Manager Kortnee Virus, who can be an invaluable resource to them when that time approaches. She and the administrative team discuss both short-term (one-year) and long-term (five-year) goals with doctors. She has brought the new office and office relocation packages to their attention. These include top-notch resources, such as location heat maps that show high-traffic areas and optical spends; available bank programs; and how this program can dovetail with the practice transitions program by Vision Source<sup>®</sup> Vice President, Practice Development, Walt West, OD, FAAO. Kortnee says that she looks forward to working with the doctors and administrators as the practice evolves.