“As the profession of Optometry grows and meets the demands of health care today, well-trained paraoptometrics become an essential component to any practice. By recognizing the outstanding value of an educated, dedicated and committed paraoptometric staff, optometrists will be better prepared to be in the forefront of primary eye care delivery.”

Erlinda T. Rodriguez, CPO, PRC Executive Committee chair

Thank you for supporting the value of your staff to use the materials provided in this Paraoptometric Recognition Week (PRW) kit at your practice. You have demonstrated a commitment to rewarding your staff for all their efforts to help make your practice more successful.

Enclosed you will find:

- PRW Poster
- PRW table top tent
- Two press release options- for your local newspaper or practice newsletter
- Recognize. Reward. Retain. Handout - No cost/low cost Recognition Tips
- Handout on celebrating staff work anniversaries
- AOA Associate member enrollment information (Free to all paraoptometrics/optometric staff (non-OD) of AOA Member ODs, and at no additional membership dues increase to the OD. It’s a new AOA member optometrist member benefit!)
- AOA Paraoptometric Career Ladder information
- Photo Contest Entry Form (submit pictures of your PRW event and you may win a prize!)
- Information from Alcon and Transitions, our industry sponsors.

We hope that you will utilize the materials and celebrate with your national organization in recognizing your staff during the third week in September.

If you have any questions, please contact us at PRC@aoa.org.
Paraoptometric Recognition Week

Recognize the Best, Inspire the Rest
September 13 – 19, 2015
Recognition Week

Paraoptometric Recognition Week

Recognize the Best, Inspire the Rest

September 13 – 19, 2015
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Optometric Association Prepares to Celebrate Paraoptometric Recognition Week

ST. LOUIS, (August 13, 2015)—The American Optometric Association (AOA) will celebrate its 13th annual Paraoptometric Recognition Week September 13-19, 2015, which will honor paraoptometrics for their dedication to the patients they serve and to the profession of optometry.

Paraoptometrics are key members of the eye care delivery team in optometric offices all across the country. Their role is even more critical to providing the best patient care possible in today’s health care environment.

The AOA Paraoptometric Resource Center (PRC) suggests a variety of ways to celebrate the week and encourages doctors to be creative in planning their festivities. Paraoptometric Recognition Week promotional kits are available to AOA members free of charge and include a poster, a table top tent, handouts for ODs with tips for staff recognition, information about AOA associate member enrollment and staff certification, and more. Kits may be requested by contacting pararecognition@aoa.org.

“Paraoptometrics are an essential part of the eye care team,” said Linda Rodgriguez, CPO, chair of the PRC Executive Committee. “The potential of a well-trained optometric staff is of utmost importance and the formula to achieve a successful optometric practice. Optometrists who recognize their paraoptometric staff for their dedication, knowledge and professionalism are rewarded with satisfied patients and practice growth.”

To learn more information about Paraoptometric Recognition Week, paraoptometry and the benefits of paraoptometric certification, visit aoa.org/paraoptometrics or call 800.365.2219, ext. 4108.

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):
The American Optometric Association, a federation of state, student and armed forces optometric associations, was founded in 1898. Today, the AOA is proud to represent the profession of optometry, America’s family eye doctors, who take a leading role in an individual’s overall eye and vision care, health and well-being. Doctors of optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye and have extensive, ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat and manage disorders, diseases and injuries that affect the eye and visual system, providing two-thirds of primary eye care in the U.S. For information on a variety of eye health and vision topics, and to find an optometrist near you, visit www.aoa.org.

Exceptional organizations find a way to recognize, reward, and retain good people. They understand that recognition penetrates where money cannot.

It doesn't take a lot of time or money to reinvest in the staff that helped earn your profits. There should always be room within your budget to recognize your staff for going the extra mile.

WHY GIVE RECOGNITION

- Motivates people to reach goals
- Fosters increased productivity
- Makes people feel valued
- Improves employee retention
- Promotes positive behavior
- Builds teamwork

WHERE TO GIVE RECOGNITION

- Special events such as a banquet or luncheon
- Staff meetings
- Company-wide meetings
- “Wall of Fame” or bulletin board
- Social media (Facebook or Twitter)
- One-on-one encounters

WHEN TO GIVE RECOGNITION

If you look for recognition opportunities, you will find them. Take advantage of those “spur of the moment” opportunities. Do not wait until a later time to recognize them; do it when you see it. Here are some occasions to provide recognition to your staff:

- When great customer service is provided
- Reaching goals or milestones
- Accomplishments such as certification, learning new computer software, bringing in new ideas to the practice, or lending a helping hand to other staff
- Performance reviews
- When they eliminate waste or improve efficiency
- Employee’s birthday

“Instruction does much, but encouragement everything.”
— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Words of Encouragement

“Thank you for going above and beyond in all that you do.”

“You are an example of our tradition of excellence.”

“You are making a difference in our office and in your profession.”

“You set high standards for others to strive toward.”

“Your outstanding contributions help our office stand above the rest.”

“You are a top quality performer. You are key to our success.”

“Your motivation and determination lead others to higher performance.”

**FOR STARTERS:**
- Recognize an employee’s aptitude or skill by inviting him/her to teach or coach others in a technique
- Recognize employees for their hard work with a classified ad in the local newspaper or on social media
- Dedicate a special parking spot for an Employee of the Month
- Create an employee “Wall of Fame.” Post thank you notes from patients, pictures of staff’s children or weddings, news clippings of staff involvement in the community
- Name areas or rooms in the practice after staff who have been there the longest. Change when they retire or are no longer employed at office
- Have a special name tag for being the most helpful or going above and beyond. Rotate the name tag on a monthly basis
- Make a Quotation Book. Staff design a background with an inspirational quote on it. Pick one each month from the book to display for all to see.
- Provide a drop cloth/banner and markers on the staff lounge table. Have them create on their own, or write “Why I love my job…”
- Have staff design and work on a float for a community parade
- Provide a picnic table so staff can eat their lunch outside on nice days

**HOW TO PROVIDE RECOGNITION**

**MORE IDEAS**

1. Write words of appreciation on the back of your paycheck envelopes. Possibilities may include words such as “Our practice is doing well because of your hard work. Thank you for all you do.”
2. Call a local radio station and dedicate a song to your staff during work hours. Use the press release in your Paraoptometric Recognition Week kit for the radio station to use as an introduction before the song begins.
3. Use colored chalk to write a message of appreciation to your employees on the parking lot/walkway to the entrance of the building in which they work.
4. Each day of the week give your staff a playing card. At the end of Paraoptometric Recognition Week employees play their best poker hand and the winner gets a prize.
5. Schedule a five-minute break during which everyone says something nice to co-workers recognizing them for their contributions to the success of the practice.
6. Hire a local artist to draw caricatures of your employees during their break/lunch hour and display in the office.
7. Leave small surprises such as a candy bars, key chains, or practice-identified merchandise in the form of caps or T-shirts in each employee’s work area.
8. Bring in soft drinks, bottled water and juices to stock the staff refrigerator for the week.
9. Write a thank you note to each employee’s spouse or children. Suggestion: “Please accept my sincere appreciation for the support you have given to your mother (dad, wife or husband) in his/her pursuit of a career with our practice. I’m fortunate to have him/her on the team and want you to know how lucky you are to have him/her as your parent/spouse. He/she is a great asset to our team.”
10. Make a CD using “eye-related” songs and play a game of “Name that Tune” during lunch hour with your staff.
11. Recognize employees for extra efforts by leaving a two dollar bill for them with a note.
12. Showcase photos of your employees at work and play in your office during PRW.
14. Surprise your staff with funny screensavers for their computers.
15. Recognize energetic employees with Energizer batteries and a certificate.
16. Provide business cards for staff. There are many online businesses that provide 250 cards for free.
17. Design a bingo card and play bingo for prizes each day during lunchtime. There are Websites to generate your own “customized” bingo cards.

18. Hire a photographer to come in and photograph your team of employees.
19. Hold a polka dot day. Everyone dresses in polka dots. The winner is the one wearing the most “dots.”
20. Have a grab bag of privileges/tokens of appreciation for employees to receive each day. Ideas: leave one hour early, arrive one hour late, special parking privilege, free lunch, fruit smoothie, lottery tickets, etc. to use throughout the year.

21. During Paraoptometric Recognition Week mark the entrance to your office as “VIP entrance” then a sign by the door, “Through this door pass the most dedicated staff in town. You are the BEST. Thank you for being here.”
22. Send a letter to the employee’s family praising their accomplishments.
23. Read letters from satisfied patients at staff meetings, then post them on your website or Facebook page.
24. Recognize employees with badges or pins to wear on their shirt.
25. Share stories in staff meetings about co-workers who have gone out of their way for patients or staff.
26. Have a money jar for staff recognition. Everytime someone does something worthy of recognition, the practice puts a quarter in the jar. When filled, the staff can vote on how the money is to be used.

27. Purchase tubs of cookie dough for each staff member with the note attached to it – “We wanted to give you a little dough to show our appreciation. Thank you for all you do!”
28. Make pancakes for a staff breakfast with a variety of syrups. Make a sign that states, “We’re ‘pouring out’ our gratitude and hoping you have a Paraoptometric Recognition Week to ‘flip over!’”
29. Purchase bottles of 7up for each staff member and attach a note stating, “Here are ‘seven’ reasons why you are ‘up’-preciated.” List on the note seven reasons why you appreciate your staff.
30. Bring in a big tray of cinnamon rolls for a mid-day snack for staff. Make a sign to place in front of the tray stating, “You’re on a roll...keep up the good work!”

31. At an employee meeting, surprise staff by taping gift certificates to the bottom of the chairs.
32. Have nametags made for certified staff, highlighting their certification level.
33. Create posters and hang them around the office with pictures of the staff along with nicknames you have created that reflect their work personality. For example, Michelle: The Rockstar, Katie: The Problem Solver, Cheryl: The Busy Bee, etc.
34. Give each member of your staff a spring bulb to plant outside of your office. Attach a note that reads “We look forward to seeing you bloom.”
35. Give each member of your staff a scented candle with a note attached that reads, “No one holds a candle to you!”
36. Make cupcakes or purchase gift certificates from a local bakery for your staff. Make a sign that states, “You take the cake!” Have either the certificates or cupcakes for each staff person by the sign.
37. Provide beads and accessories for each staff person to make their own bracelet. Allow time throughout the day for staff to get “crafty.”
38. Perform community service together as a group.
39. Give employees a handful of “Thanks! You made my day!” cards to fill out for each other.
40. Send in photos of your staff during Paraoptometric Recognition Week to PRC@aoa.org to be entered in our photo contest for a chance to win free study materials!

Many of the ideas are excerpts from “450 Low-Cost No-Cost strategies for recognizing, rewarding and retaining good people”, Volume 1 & 2 by Carol A. Hacker.
Paraoptometric Recognition Week

Celebrating Work Anniversaries

Why celebrate work anniversaries?

- Create a positive work environment
- Encourage employee commitment and engagement
- Increase staff retention

“78% of employees said it was very or extremely important to be recognized by their managers when they do good work.”
- RecognitionPRO

Recognition Gift Ideas

- Card with congratulatory messages
- Letters written by staff
- Catered lunch
- Tickets to a special event
- Plaque or pin
- Time off of work/Leave early
- Cake
- Special memories or photo presentation

Feel as Good as the FIRST Day of Work

Do you remember how good it felt on the first day of work? Everyone remembers their hire date because, in simple terms, it’s basically like a career birthday. Whether you celebrate one, five, ten or more years of employment, recognizing staff on their work anniversaries demonstrates you appreciate them as much as you did on their first day at your office. Your entire staff will be excited to celebrate with others because one day it will be their special day. Celebrating work anniversaries is a vehicle to boost staff morale. Remembering what has been accomplished and sharing some laughter with people you spend a large amount of your life with is a great way to acknowledge those who have helped you along the way. Success doesn’t happen on its own; it’s the contributions of all that represent the whole essence of success.

Tips for Celebrating Work Anniversaries

- You can’t very well celebrate a work anniversary if you don’t know when it is, so make sure you include new hire dates in a staff recognition spreadsheet, and electronic calendar.
- Discuss with management what will be given as a token of appreciation for staff’s service. Whether a little or big gesture - make it a personal one.
- Be sure to be consistent in whatever you do with all your staff, all the time. Don’t show favoritism. Even just sincere words go a long way toward making staff feel appreciated.

Create excitement and engagement by including all staff in your work anniversary celebrations!
Enroll your optometric staff (non-OD) as AOA associate members!

No charge to the member OD.

Unlock your Staff’s Potential

To enroll staff, visit: www.aoa.org/SSO/Account/ManageStaff

Questions? Contact the Paraoptometric Resource Center:
prc@aoa.org
800-365-2219, ext 4108

Associate member benefits include:

- Online training program for new hires
- Online continuing education (CE)
- Billing and coding training
- Discounted fees for paraoptometric education materials
- Reduced registration fees for Optometry’s Meeting®

9000+ Enrolled
1. What is the Paraoptometric Career Ladder?

The AOA Paraoptometric Resource Center launched another OD member benefit that will revolutionize the way optometric practices hire and train staff. The Paraoptometric Career Ladder:

- Integrates an easy-to-follow, self-paced roadmap to learning for optometric staff
- Streamlines the training of new optometric staff or cross-training of seasoned staff in six different job areas.
- The program, complete with an Assessment Tool, helps the optometrist or office manager determine the full range of staff’s abilities and identifies the areas of need for additional training.
- And, best of all, it’s offered at no cost to our members.

2. Who is the Paraoptometric Career Ladder designed for?

Paraoptometrics/optometric staff (new or seasoned staff) who work in any of these six job responsibility areas:

- Contact Lens Tech
- Optical
- Office Administration
- Insurance Processing
- Front Desk
- Technician

3. When should the Paraoptometric Career Ladder be used?

The Paraoptometric Career Ladder is designed to be used in a variety of ways, each having its own value and outcomes such as:

- Setting expectations on the job interview
- Evaluating annual staff performance
- Preparing to sit for a certification examination
- During staff meetings

4. Where do you find the training materials used with the Paraoptometric Career Ladder?

Many of the free resources identified in each job area may be found on the AOA website under the Paraoptometric Tab, and the fee-based resources may be ordered through the AOA Marketplace.

5. Why should every optometric practice use the Paraoptometric Career Ladder?

By utilizing the Paraoptometric Career Ladder you will know that optometric staff are receiving training in the most effective, efficient, and consistent manner, whether they begin their training now, three months from now, or any time in the future.
Paraoptometric Recognition Week

Photo Contest 2015

We hope you find the Paraoptometric Recognition Week Kit helpful. We would like to see how your practice is celebrating with your paraoptometrics during the week. Enter photos of your celebratory moments in our photo contest. We want to see photos of your office and staff and the ways that you recognized your staff. See the examples below. Be as creative as you can and enter as many photos as you like!

Who can participate?
This contest is open to AOA associate paraoptometric members and their AOA member optometrist.

All photos must meet the following requirements:
• Photos should be submitted in JPEG format
• Photos must also be an original, not previously published in other publications
• Photo will become the property of the American Optometric Association
• All individuals in the photograph must provide permission to use their photo, prior to photo entry

Prize:
The winner will receive one of our products FREE, up to $250 value (bundles included).

Entry form:
Complete the entry form by visiting https://amopt.wufoo.com/forms/2015-paraoptometric-recognition-week-photo-contest/

Mark Your Calendars:
September 13, 2015 (Start of acceptance of entries)     October 2, 2015 (Deadline for submission of entries)
2nd Week of November (Winner announced in fall PRC newsletter)
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to a new eye color.

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**References:**

See product instructions for complete wear, care and safety information.

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