

“Putting an emphasis on patient education”

by Robert Baker, Correspondent

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Dr. Barbara Tarbell, or “Dr. T” as she is affectionately known to many of her patients, is an optometrist with a thriving practice in Hillsborough ([www.eyecare-nj.com](http://www.eyecare-nj.com)). The practice will celebrate its 15th Anniversary in September with a new name, Advanced Eyecare & Vision Gallery.

“Part of the reason for the new name is that we go far beyond simply providing routine eye examinations,” Dr. Tarbell explains. “Yes, we have all the latest computerized diagnostic tools, including retinal mapping and visual field testing, but that’s not the reason why our patients keep coming back. Our emphasis is on educating and partnering with them to assure ocular health.”

After a test is completed, Dr. Tarbell personally reviews the results with the patient, explaining areas of significance on the computer screen or a printout. “We explain exactly what the test is intended to detect,” she says. “We then interpret the results so that they fully understand them and know exactly what to expect in the future.”

Children’s eye care is an area of particular importance to Dr. Tarbell and her staff. “An eye exam that tests only distance vision is not an adequate evaluation of a child’s visual development,” she emphasizes. “You also need to test for things like the ability of the eyes to maintain clear focus at varying distances and to accurately follow a moving object. We also test for depth perception, the ability to differentiate colors and the ability of the eyes to focus and work together as a team.”

Long term relationships are very important to Dr. Tarbell and her staff. “We offer an exclusive two-year warranty on frames, for example,” she notes. “We also offer a guaranteed contact lens success program. We not only fit patients with the proper lenses, but continue to see them weekly for three months to make sure the eye is adapting to them and that they are comfortable and performing correctly. If it becomes necessary to provide new lenses, this is included as part of the program.”

LASIK, or Laser Vision Correction, can be an effective treatment for some, but patients must be carefully evaluated to make sure it is right for them. “We work with a board certified corneal specialist who has performed over 15,000 successful LASIK surgeries,” Dr. Tarbell explains. “We co-manage a patient’s care from initial diagnosis until well after the surgery has been performed.”

Even more important than treatment, however, is prevention. “It has been said that the eyes are the gateway to the soul,” says Dr. Tarbell. “But they can also be a source of information about other parts of the body. For example, we detected retinal plaque formation, an indication of plaque in veins and arteries, in one patient and recommended that he see a specialist. If left untreated, the condition could have resulted in a stroke.”

Dr. Tarbell takes great care in inviting associates to join her staff. “I find that taking someone to lunch is a great way to get to know them,” she says. “I like to take them to Old Man Rafferty’s. They not only have great food, but will let you sit and talk as long as you like without making you feel rushed. I also occasionally take my staff to dinner as a way to build camaraderie and discuss how we can better work together as a

team. The new Belissimo is a great place to do this. The food and service are outstanding and they are happy to accommodate any special dietary requests by people who are vegetarians, for example, or who may have food allergies.”

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