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Women of Distinction--Laboratories

2006 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL Women IN OPTICAL

Karen Keeney

President
Chadwick Optical
White River Junction, Vt.

CHOSEN BECAUSE... "Karen Keeney wrote and received the first known National Institute of Health (NIH) grant awarded to an optical laboratory. She used this first grant to develop functional, low-cost lenses for people suffering from hemianopia--a one-side blindness caused by head trauma, stroke or brain tumors."

Starting in the frame plant as a factory worker for American Optical in Southbridge, Mass., Karen Keeney found a mentor in John Chadwick. Taking advantage of the earn-while-you-learn program, Keeney received her B.S. and MSBS from local colleges while working her way up at American Optical. When Keeney and her husband bought an abandoned B&L lab in 1980, they named it after Keeney's mentor, John Chadwick. In 2001, Keeney took over 100 percent ownership of Chadwick Optical and decided to redirect the business to focus on low vision needs. Dr. Eli Peli from the Schepens Eye Research Institute encouraged Keeney to write and submit a low vision grant, which she was awarded in 2003. Keeney was then awarded a second phase Small Business Innovation and Research Grant back in May of 2006, which will allow her company to continue a collaboration with the Schepens Eye Research Institute to further refine the first glasses developed.



SHE SAYS... "I really want to put low vision on the map and make the general public aware of what can be done creatively with eyewear to help people with low vision. We take great pride in doing Rx's that other labs say 'can't be done.'"

Carol Lamy

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