

Dr. Frank D. Fontana Memorial Scholarship



The Heart of America Eye Care Congress, in collaboration with VSP Vision™, is proud to announce the 7th annual Dr. Frank D. Fontana Memorial Scholarship. Affectionately known as “Uncle Frank,” Dr. Fontana practiced for nearly 70 years, leaving an unmatched legacy behind as a colleague, mentor, and friend to so many.

One optometry student will be awarded a \$4,250 scholarship, plus a \$750 travel grant to the Heart of America Eye Care Congress in February 2026. Recipient must attend this event to receive the scholarship and travel grant.*



\$4,250
SCHOLARSHIP

+

\$750
TRAVEL GRANT

How to Apply

- Submit a 1,500-word written essay on how you demonstrate the four professional characteristics at which Dr. Fontana excelled:
 1. Clinical performance.
 2. Empathetic patient care.
 3. Ability and interest to adopt technology.
 4. Strong interest in developing/ participating in the OD community.
- Provide two letters of recommendation from faculty showing how you demonstrate these characteristics. At least one letter of recommendation must be from the applicant’s clinical faculty.
- Email all materials to president@hoaecc.org.

Deadline:

December 31, 2025

Eligibility

- Must be a third or fourth year optometry student in good standing.
- Must be a student attending any school or college of optometry and have residency from any of the five Heart of America Eye Care Congress member states (Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Nebraska) **OR** provide proof of enrollment at either the University of Missouri College of Optometry or Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry.
- Must attend Heart of America Eye Care Congress to receive the scholarship and travel grant.

Questions?

Email us at president@hoaecc.org.

*Event details to be determined by the Heart of America Eye Care Congress.

About Dr. Fontana

Few people have had such a positive impact on so many as did St. Louis optometrist Dr. Frank Fontana. Affectionately called “Uncle Frank” by hundreds of peers and friends throughout optometry, Dr. Fontana earned his nickname by serving as a mentor and advocate for countless optometric educators and future leaders of the profession. He was an internationally recognized speaker and a true pioneer during the early years of contact lenses, helping train many of his colleagues throughout the U.S. in this then-new technology. He passed away in October 2018 at the age of 96.



Dr. Fontana began his career after serving in World War II, spending 35 months in the Army, 28 of those stationed in Europe. Educated under the GI Bill, he graduated from the Illinois College of Optometry in 1949 and opened his practice in St. Louis the following year. He left behind many generations of patients whom he has cared for since they were children.

Dr. Fontana held leadership positions in many groups, including the Missouri Optometric Association and the American Optometric Association (AOA). He founded the Contact Lens and Cornea Section of the AOA and co-founded the Heart of America Contact Lens Society. In his long and distinguished career, he worked with optometric publications, manufacturers, and educators, and received countless honors, including recognition on the floor of the Missouri Statehouse, where the governor—a patient of his—told officials that Dr. Fontana was the reason he could see at all.