



From left: Opticianry students show off some eyeglasses on display at Seneca's Optical Trade Show 2020 at Newnham Campus this week. More than 35 vendors participated in the annual event, which also launched a student-led eyeglass recycling initiative.

Recycling project sets sights on eyeglasses

Pilot from Opticianry program to help those in need

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Seneca has taken another stride towards sustainability by launching an initiative that not only prevents used eyeglasses from ending up in landfills, but also allows them to be repurposed as an educational resource, recycled and then donated to those in need.

iSight, a student-led eyeglass recycling initiative from the Opticianry diploma program (</programs/fulltime/OPTC.html>), was unveiled Tuesday at the Optical Trade Show 2020 at Newnham Campus. Under the pilot project, which is supported by Sustainable Seneca (</about/sustainability.html>) with plans to expand to all campuses, students are asked to bring in glasses they no longer use and drop them in designated collection bins on campus.

"I realized that most of my friends had four to five pairs of eyeglasses sitting uselessly at home while more than one billion people around the world lack access to these resources," said Opticianry student Phi Au Thi Tran, who spearheaded iSight. "These people include children with the risk of missing their education, the elderly who have lost their sight as they age and countless others who are unable to attain success at work as they don't have proper vision aides."

In addition, Ms. Tran says changing needs and fashion trends often leave people with unused eyeglasses, which are difficult to recycle as they are made with a combination of materials.

"The project is an opportunity for us to make an impact on other people's lives by paying it forward and to give the gift of sight to those who can't afford to buy eyeglasses," she said.







iSight is the brainchild of Opticianry student Phi Au Thi Tran, who says eyeglass recycling is an opportunity for students to give the gift of sight.

The discarded eyeglasses will be used by Opticianry students to get more hands-on experience in areas such as reading prescription numbers. After that, they will be collected by a voluntary organization, sorted out for sizes and labelled to be sent to India and Africa free of cost for distribution among those in need.

“This project is very close to my heart as my own father had lost his eyesight. It is a phenomenal idea,” said Prof. Shan Khan, who has worked closely with Ms. Tran on the project. “It is great to have our students get involved in initiatives that help them in their education while at the same time helping others.”

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