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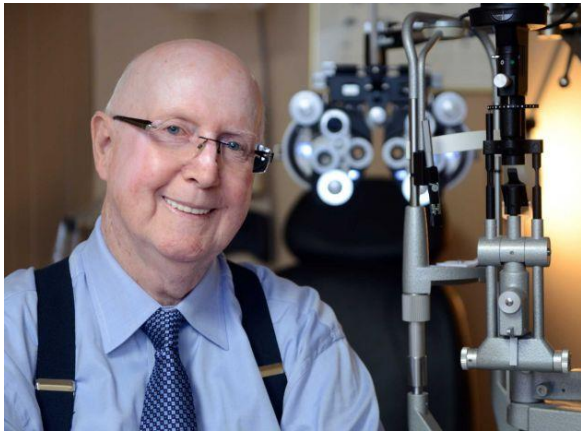
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**Q&A with Dr. Michael Gorman**

October 9, 2014

Keila Torres Ocasio



**Dr. Michael Gorman, optometrist and owner of Family Vision Center, sits in an exam room at the practice's Stratford location. Photo: Autumn Driscoll**

Q: Tell us about [Family Vision Center](#).

A: I opened my practice in 1964 under my own name. In 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled all professions could advertise their services. This was followed in 1978 with a [Federal Trade Commission](#) regulation that allowed professions to have trade names and have multiple offices without state board approvals. Many professionals took advantage of the new regulations, and in 1980 I became Family Vision Center.

Q: Why did you choose to open your business on Bridgeport's Boston Avenue?

A: Location was key to where I would open. In 1964, Boston Avenue was very busy with General Electric employees coming and going to work as well as being situated right between [Bridgeport Hospital](#) and [St. Vincent's Medical Center](#). Adjacent to our building was [Pantry Pride Shopping Center](#) and Shopping World across the street. This provided ample traffic for our new patients.

Q: How has the area changed?

A: The adjacent shopping centers have expanded greatly, adding banks, fast food chains and several small businesses. The biggest change was the completion of the Route 25/8 with exit 5 converging onto Boston Avenue.

Q: How is optometry different from when you opened your business 50 years ago?

A: The basic eye care we provide is still comprehensive eye exams, eyeglasses and contact lenses. Over the past 30 years, optometry has expanded its services to include primary medical eye care. Optometrists

can diagnose glaucoma, macular degeneration and cataracts, even writing prescriptions to treat these diseases.

Q: How has the business been affected by the Internet and people's ability to buy glasses online?

A: The Internet offers consumers another choice on how to receive their eyewear products. Although it is a very small percentage of total sales, it is growing. Presently, Family Vision Center offers both sunglasses and contacts for sale on our website.

Q: You were president of [the Connecticut Visual Health Center](#) for 30 years. What did the organization do?

A: The Connecticut Visual Health Center started in 1970 when attorney [Al Winters](#) offered to do all our legal work to become a nonprofit organization. CVHC was started because eye care was not covered for the poor. We joined with the [Salvation Army](#) on Elm Street in Bridgeport and opened one day a week and provided free eye exams and free glasses to all area residents. We had volunteer doctors and staff and many labs in Connecticut provided eyeglasses at no charge. When Medicaid was later on expanded to cover eye exams and glasses, CVHC no longer was needed. So it closed in 1985 and the remaining funds were used for public education of eye care. We were happy that CVHC provided help to thousands of people. But now that they had eye care coverage with private optometrists, our services were no longer needed.



**Dr. Michael Gorman, optometrist and owner of Family Vision Center, poses for a photograph with his daughters Kathy Raucci, left, and Kristine Heslin, both managing partners, at the practice's Stratford location. Photo: Autumn Driscoll**

Q: Tell us how your daughters and granddaughters got involved in the family business.

A: In the beginning, my wife, Diane, was my receptionist. My wife and I would talk about the business at dinnertime with the children. They heard all about the difficulties of running a business and, of course, had a suggestion for every problem. The children visited the practice many times during their early childhood, even giving tours to their friends. As they became

older, Kathy and Kristine gravitated toward the practice as a full-time job. (They) got involved in the practice 20 years ago. Kathy had always shown a great affinity for numbers and handling money, so she was the perfect person to become our business manager. Kristine was

more drawn to working with people, even using a team approach to get things accomplished within the practice. She became our managing director. So it was easy to include them in ownership when I completed my succession plan. My granddaughters are shining examples for a third-generation support for Family Vision Center. One recently became a licensed optician and another one is in her first year of optometry school in Massachusetts.

Q: Will it be hard to walk away and give up the reins?

A: Walking away is easy knowing Family Vision Center is in good hands.