

PROFILE

Dr. Hennig was born at Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospital between Mattoon and Charleston and was raised in Charleston. He graduated valedictorian of Southern College of Optometry, class of 2017. His "interest was piqued in fourth grade as I was sitting in Dr. Mark Esarey's chair for an eye exam. I remember thinking, "this guy looks like he's having so much fun at work," and I wanted to have that much fun when I grew up too. He showed me around the office and told me about the different instruments. Seventeen years later I joined his practice as a doctor!" He chose to stay and practice in Illinois because he and his wife are both from the area and wanted to stay close to family. Dr. Hennig believes that he "wake(s) up every day feeling blessed to have a beautiful family and a career that I genuinely enjoy. God has been very good to me!"

ILLINOIS OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

Lifetime Eye Care

BOARD MEMBER FEATURE:

Derek Hennig, O.D.

WHAT HE LOVES MOST ABOUT HIS JOB

"I love that every day is different and presents new challenges. Lifelong learning is a must in optometry, and I enjoy learning new things each day, whether clinic-related, business-related or simply learning new things about my patients."

UNUSUAL OR SURPRISING DIAGNOSIS

"One that stands out to me was a gentleman who came in complaining of vision loss to one side. After workup and an MRI, it was determined that his previous cancer had returned and metastasized to his brain. It was a scary diagnosis, but we were able to get him back to his oncologist for treatment. Sadly, he passed away a few years after that visit, but I am happy to know we were able to give him a few more years with is family by diagnosing him quickly."

ADVICE FOR NEW OPTOMETRISTS

"Don't limit your job opportunities based on salary or student loan concerns. Have a plan for how you will pay off your debt and stick to it. Don't get caught up in the new cars, big houses, or other large purchases right after graduation. That will allow you to work in the environment of your choosing (private practice, hospital based, institution, etc) without so much pressure on income. Starting off in a private practice, I am sure I made less than a lot of my peers who took other positions. But I knew that's where I wanted to be. So, we kept our expenses down (even with having three babies, two of which were preemie and spent nearly two months in the NICU) and lived below our means. After a few years of building my patient base, my income is steadily increasing, and five years after graduation we are debt free and so much happier for it! Don't let the fear of student loan debt limit your job opportunities. Make a plan and stick to it!

WHAT HE DOES IN HIS SPARE TIME

"I I am an avid St. Louis Cardinals fan, so I enjoy going to games when I can. I love being in the outdoors, especially camping and bowhunting. Most of all, I love spending time with my wife, Lauren, and our three kids Noah, Clara, and Adelynn."