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## Young Optometrist of the Year practices in Whittier, Covina

By Ryan Carter, Staff Writer

Posted: 03/12/2010 06:34:26 PM PST



Optometrist David Ardaya sits in an examination room at Golden Optometric in Whittier on March March 12, 2010. Ardaya was recently named Young Optometrist of the Year for 2009 by the California Optometric Association. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Durflinger)

**WHITTIER** - David Ardaya was always focused - at least since his college days.

He knew he wanted to do something to help people. Pursuing a doctorate in physiology was an option, but he wanted to interact with people every day.

His vision led to becoming an optometrist - they are the folks who do 70 percent of the eye

exams in this country. And that led to a job about five years ago at the 50-year-old Golden Optometric Group in Whittier.

There was only one problem - more like a challenge.

Organized optometry, at least in California, needed some updating.

In Ardaya's eyes, optometrists, the professionals that most people go to for eye checks, were held back by state laws that limited what they could do and treat.

Ardaya saw a chance to change that. And he did.

Ardaya, 34, has been named Young Optometrist of the Year by the California Optometric Association for his contributions to optometry and society.

Those contributions centered around his efforts to get the laws changed that allow patients more access to optometrists.

"My goal is to increase our ability to practice ... it's a new world, it's a new medical environment that's allowed other medical practitioners to do more treatments allowing greater care," he said.

Ardaya was driven by his California colleagues' legally sanctioned inability to provide more care.

Yet in other states, like Arizona, where Ardaya worked briefly at the start of his career, they

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could live up to the intense training they go through to get a license.

But in California, for example, there were restrictions against using certain antibiotics for specific ailments, said David Golden, owner of Golden Optometric.

"You had to get through impossible scenarios to get licensed," he said. " And then you couldn't actually do the treatment. The criteria was too stiff to get in the door."

It came down to something as simple as the portion of the eye - the



Optometrist David Ardaya examines the eyes of Saul Ramirez at Golden Optometric in Whittier on March 12, 2010. Ardaya was recently named Young Optometrist of the Year for 2009 by the California Optometric Association. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Durflinger)

center or the side - from which a practitioner was allowed to remove a piece of metal, Golden said.

In short, it was politics.

But Ardaya, who rose quickly through the ranks of the Orange County Optometric Society, engaged those politics in a push to change the law, and it worked, Golden said.

"He was instrumental," he said.

Ultimately, by allowing optometrists more latitude in treatment, a patient's health care costs can be reduced.

Instead of having an emergency room doctor remove that piece of metal from the eye for more than \$1,300, an optometrist can do it for less, Golden said.

Ultimately, it's good for business, Ardaya said.

"It's wonderful to expand the amount of trained people to do a service," he said.

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**David Ardaya**

**TITLE:** Optometrist

**WHERE:** Golden Optometric Group in Whittier

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and Covina

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