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Vision-care market sees green with Palin's specs

BY BRUCE HOROVITZ
Gannett News Service

The nation's eyes aren't just on Gov. Sarah Palin — they're on her glasses.

It's been awhile since the optical business has been as charged by celebrity specs as it has by the rimless pair the vice presidential nominee wears most of the time. If she wins, it could rock the vision-care market, which totals \$26.6 billion a year, says tracker Jobson Optical Research.

It's already shaking up the company that makes them.

"We keep getting calls from dealers who want to stock the exact shape and style that she's wearing," says Amy Hahn, vice president at Italee, the U.S. distributor of the frames designed by Kazuo Kawasaki, a Japanese industrial designer.

The Palin frame — minus the lenses — starts at a suggested \$375. Depending on the type of lenses, the total package runs to \$700.

"She's what's new, and consumers want what's new," says Dr. Joyce Brothers, the consumer psychologist. "But if she loses, you won't see many people in those glasses."

That still gives the eyeglass maker through Nov. 4 to cash in.

"Smart optometrists who don't carry the line should," says Gloria Nicola, senior editor at 20/20, an eyewear trade magazine. If they can't get it quickly, she says, they should at least sell similar-looking brands.

Matching the look won't be easy. Although the frames are sold at many optical boutiques, the shape of the strongly rectangular lenses was custom-made for Palin by Home Optics, an upscale retailer in Chugiak, Alaska.

Owner Joy Leedham went to Palin's home in late December and fitted her in her kitchen — where Palin considered nearly 300 frames. They narrowed it to five frames, and Palin's family helped pick the winner. The frame is Kawasaki's 704 series, and the color is 34 gray, Hahn says.

Palin is nearsighted and has slight astigmatism, Leedham says. She does not wear bifocal lenses.

Palin told Leedham that she owned seven pairs of glasses. The frames that Palin picked "help her look fashion-forward," Leedham says.

The Kawasaki frames are made from titanium and mounted via a screwless, tension system.

Similar but older versions of the frames have been worn by Colin Powell, David Letterman and Whoopi Goldberg, says Bart VanderVelde, national sales manager at Italee. But few celebs in glasses have set off this kind of frenzy, he says. "We're still wondering what to do if she gets elected."



GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

■ Vice presidential nominee Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin walks onto the stage during the 2008 Republican National Convention at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn., on Wednesday.

"The veins are gone for the rest of my life. It's amazing. I can't wait to wear shorts and skirts. I don't have to wear pants all the time."

■ Suzanne Weber, patient at Vein Specialists in Fort Myers



PHOTOS BY MARC BEAUDIN/THE NEWS-PRESS

■ Dr. Joseph Magnant, a vascular surgeon at Vein Specialists, evaluates Suzanne Weber during a visit at the Fort Myers clinic.

NEW LASER MAKES VEINS VANISH

Procedure quickly removes varicose veins without surgery

BY FRANCESCA DONLAN
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Suzanne Weber works at a golf club but rarely wears golf shorts or skirts.

The fit membership director at Palmira Golf Club in Bonita Springs is too self-conscious about her legs.

Weber, 46, had bulging varicose veins and spider veins on her legs. The Estero mother of two also suffered from aches and pains in her legs after a day on her feet.

Weber joins an estimated 20 to 25 million adults in the United States who suffer from varicose vein-related problems.

New less-invasive technologies make it possible for Weber and others to eliminate troublesome veins without hospitalization. Many insurance companies are paying for the procedure.

Dr. Joseph Magnant, a board certified vascular surgeon with Vein Specialists at Royal Palm Square in Fort Myers, uses a system recently approved by the FDA — the ClosureFAST catheter — which heats and seals the affected leg veins.

The system, developed by VNUS Medical Technologies Inc., can be performed in the physician's office with a local anesthesia and treats leaky valves, varicose veins and leaky superficial veins.

"This technology is becoming widely available," Magnant said. "A lot of people still think this is a cosmetic procedure, but it is not. It is a medical condition. Venous disease causes disability and pain."

Varicose veins are enlarged veins that bulge near the surface of the skin. They are most often noticed in the legs and ankles. Varicose veins occur when veins have trouble carrying blood from the legs back to the heart due to faulty valves and weakened vein walls.

Many people with varicose veins also experience pain, swelling, numbness and fatigue in the legs.

Weber watched her mother suffer from varicose veins and didn't want to wait too long before getting treatment.

"It does get worse," Mag-



■ Dr. Magnant gives an injection to patient Marlene Redhead at the Vein Specialists clinic in Fort Myers.

nant said.

Patricia Doran, 60, suffered from painful swelling, ulcers and blisters on her legs. Her mother had her veins stripped years ago and spent six months in bed.

Doran didn't want to go that route. Two weeks ago, Dr. Magnant removed veins in her right leg.

"I've gone down a shoe size because the swelling and pressure has gone down," she said. "I've had no pain whatsoever."

Technology has revolutionized the treatment of vein disease, said Dr. Ted King, medical director of the Vein Clinics of America network.

"Not many people are doing vein stripping because they don't have too. Unfortunately, a lot of people believe the only way to get rid of varicose veins is to have surgery," King said. "Now you can get a local anesthetic and walk out an hour later. There's no down time and you can go back to normal activity."

Patients are awake for the entire procedure, Magnant said.

Weber, who already has gotten treatment on her left leg, called the pain like an occasional bee sting.

"Patients can drive in and drive out," said Dr. Moutaa BenMaamer, vascular surgeon at the Suncoast Group in Fort Myers.

He uses an intravenous laser treatment to remove the vein, he said. New technology makes it much easier on the patient, he said.

Most of Magnant's and BenMaamer's patients develop varicose veins because of a genetic roll of the dice.

"It's hereditary, hereditary,

hereditary and then having babies," Magnant said. Also, obesity is an issue for men and women.

Marlene Redhead, 61, a teacher at Bonita Middle School, chose to have her veins removed because her legs were aching and her veins were popping out.

"My father had very bad varicose veins," she said. "His legs were almost blue. They couldn't do too much about it in those days."

But Redhead can. Last Thursday, Magnant injected her with a chemical solution to help erase spider veins. She'd already had her veins sealed in a previous appointment and was happy with the results. She doesn't have time for aches or bed rest.

"I'm going to a football game after this," she said.

Redhead is typical of most patients, King said.

"Unfortunately, a significant percentage of people who have varicose veins still think there's really no reason to take care of them," King said.

"Severe varicose veins put people at risk for a number of complications such as bleeding and blood clots."

BenMaamer also stresses the importance of prevention. He points out another good reason as well.

"It's Florida and we like to wear shorts in Florida," he said.

Weber is glad she took care of her varicose veins. She is looking forward to new energy — and a new wardrobe.

"The veins are gone for the rest of my life," she said. "It's amazing. I can't wait to wear shorts and skirts. I don't have to wear pants all the time."

Americans look online for love matches

BY ELIZABETH LLORENTE
McClatchy News Service

HACKENSACK, N.J. — Becca Klinger was always outgoing, and she had more friends than she could count.

But when it came to dating, she felt awkward.

"I was not very confident," Klinger, a 21-year-old Ramapo College student, says of the way she was only two years ago. "I was just very nervous about talking to guys."

Then, at the urging of a friend, she signed up on True.com, a dating site, and her social life spun into the stratosphere.

"I used a picture that showed me exactly how I was," she said, adding that she was heavy at the time. "I decided I wasn't going to try to be something I wasn't. I was surprised, the response was overwhelming."

Klinger is one of millions of Americans who have turned to so-called social networking sites, making them a nearly mainstream way of meeting future boyfriends, girlfriends and even spouses. A 2006 report on cyber-dating by the Washington-based Pew Internet and American Life Project said that some 3 million Americans had entered long-term relationships with — or married — someone they had met online.

JupiterResearch estimates that the U.S. online dating market will rake in more than \$900 million by 2011.

In Pompton Lakes, N.J., the online dating trend has become clear to Rabbi David Senter of the Congregation Beth Shalom. Senter estimates that these days, most of the couples under 50 years of age he marries "were in some variation of online dating."

"Couples who meet through the conventional means are becoming the exception rather than the rule," said Senter, who himself met his second wife through JDate.com, a Jewish matchmaking site through which New Jersey Rep. Steve Rothman also met his wife a few years ago.

"Online dating seemed like a logical thing for me to do," Senter, 47, said. "I was a rabbi in Saratoga Springs (N.Y.) at the time, and rabbis can't really hang out in bars. I had some horror stories, some women posted pictures that weren't really of themselves, and when I met them I realized it. One woman was talking about marriage before we even met."

"But there aren't many intrinsically negative or positive things about online dating that aren't true of conventional dating."

Indeed, single people who have tried online dating tell stories about people who "flirted" with them through e-mails and instant messaging even though they were married or in a supposed serious relationship. And there are stories about people who misrepresented their age, their income, their job. But many people add that such deception has always been an unfortunate part of dating, online or the traditional way.

That said, Mandi Townsend, who lives in Delaware, does see some important differences, though she views her online dating experience as generally positive.

"It could be overwhelming," Townsend, 33, said, adding that at one point she was going on so many dates she was losing track of the details about the different men. "But it works for professionals in my age range who are busy."

Townsend is in a serious relationship with a man she says she'd like to marry. She met him in her dentist's office.

"He was the appointment after me," she said. "You never know; it happens when you least expect it."