



Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare awards international expert and networking promotor

Optician of the Year 2016 is doctoral candidate, Clinical Director Robert Andersson, 39, whose extensive education and international experience provides a buttress for the development of Finland's entire field of optometry. The Vuoden Näköteko (pro-vision act of the year) award was granted to Markus Grahn (ABA), 40, who is the admin for the optical field's discussion forum, for his work in promoting transparency in networking and open discussion within the field.

The optometrist of the Year Award, granted by the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare and Finnish Professionals of Optometry, and the Vuoden Näköteko award, granted by the Finnish Fair Foundation, were presented on January 14th at the NÄE 2017 event in Helsinki.

Each year, the optometrist of the Year Award is presented to an optometrist certified in Finland, who is highly credible or who has exhibited exceptional performance or done an exceptional deed. The Vuoden Näköteko award is granted to an individual, company or organization that has promoted good eyesight in an exceptional way or made known to society the impacts and solutions of good eyesight.

Optician of the Year 2016 – Robert Andersson

“Optometrist of the Year 2016, **Robert Andersson**, has played a significant role in the development and internationalisation of optometrist education in Finland in recent years. Through the development of his own expertise, he expedites clinical expertise in Finnish optometry in a significant way”, states **Panu Tast**, managing director of the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare, when telling about the reasons for the unanimous choice.

After his studies in optometry in Finland, Andersson, who is responsible for the clinical services at Lautta Optiikka and the associated Lauttasaaren Silmälääkärikeskus, completed a master's degree in optometry in the United States in 2010. At the moment, he is working on his doctorate in biomedicine at Salus University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The first results of his clinical study concerning eye health care in elderly care homes is in the process of being published.

In addition to his research, Andersson also works as an international lecturer in the US. To promote training in Finland, Andersson has, among other things, worked at the University of Oulu as a developer of training for optometrists in the right to use diagnostic medicines. His work has also significantly furthered training-related collaboration between the Nordic countries and the United States.

Born in Helsinki, Andersson is glad that he is able to promote the field in Finland with the knowledge he has acquired abroad. Andersson states, “It's wonderful that the work I have done is seen as having an impact on the entire field in Finland. The shift from the traditional optical dispensing business to comprehensive eye health care services has prompted a complete overhaul in the services our family company offers. Investing in new skills is a key element to success during these times of change”.

NÄE ry's Tast says, “I believe the same recipe, i.e. the highest possible level of expertise, will promote the success of the entire vision and eye health care business”.



Vuoden Näköteko 2016 – Markus Grahn

Vuoden Näköteko award was granted to the founder and admin of the Facebook discussion group for the optics field, **Markus Grahn**, of Lahti, Finland. Revealing the reasons for the unanimous choice, Panu Tast says, “Networking in the optics field and transparency as well as communication among stakeholders and different groups of professionals have improved significantly as a result of Grahn’s work”.

The selection panel states that Grahn’s work as the group’s admin and leader in modernisation has proceeded in an exemplary way. Tast says, “Through his work, Markus Grahn has activated the field’s professionals in discussing field-related phenomena. It is especially valuable now, as immense changes are going on in the field. Offering a forum where people can constructively and professionally exchange their thoughts and ideas is important”.

Grahn, who has worked in the optics field since 2004, generated the idea and established the discussion group ten years ago. “My aim at that time was precisely to increase transparency, networking and provide a platform for open discussion. The recognition I have received is a wonderful tribute to the work I’ve done, and it is indication that there has been a need and demand for it”, Grahn states.

When Grahn moved the discussion group to Facebook in 2008, the group had 26 members. The group has grown steadily, and especially quickly in the past couple of years. Now the group has 1,500 members.

Having completed his associate’s degree in the optics field last year, Grahn now works at Silmäasema as an optical technician. He also does other work in the fields of security and real estate property. Describing himself as innovative and inquisitive, Grahn explains that his diverse education and career background have been an advantage to him when generating the idea for the discussion group, building it and maintaining it.

Tast summarises, “The choices for 2016 are highlighted in the important and topical themes in the field: support of community, internationalisation of training and development of excellent professional skills”.

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The Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare (NÄE ry) was established in the spring of 2016, when optical businesses and private eyecare clinics, as well as the importers and wholesalers that serve them, joined forces. NÄE ry is responsible for advocating field-related business, health care, education and communication, and engages in research and offers training. The member businesses make up more than 80 % of the turnover in the field. In addition to businesses, the association comprises educational institutions that train professionals in vision and eye health as well as the organisations representing those institutions. NÄE ry belongs to the Finnish Commerce Federation and the Federation of Finnish Enterprises.