MAKING A LASTING IMPACT ON THE PROFESSION

Four thousand five hundred. That’s how many students a colleague estimates Sam Quintero has taught since he received his doctorate and began teaching at the University of Houston, College of Optometry (UHCO) in 1972.

Having taught so many future optometrists, it is not unusual for him to encounter a several former students at the annual Academy. They often come up to him and share how his approach and high expectations were instrumental toward them becoming the kind of practitioner they are today.

“People come up to me at meetings and tell me how much of a difference I made in their lives. That’s rewarding.”

As a young man, Quintero was drawn to optometry because he saw a need in his community.

“Primarily, I became an optometrist to help people,” he said. “I came up with a lot of people in the neighborhood who needed eyewear.”

He became involved with the Academy soon after joining the UHCO faculty. He was encouraged to attend the annual meeting where he found a community of like-minded professionals. And, to his surprise, he met senior practitioners such as Glenn Fry, or as he says, “gods of the profession.”

Quintero went on to take an active leadership role in the Academy and was instrumental in shaping the way the organization is operated today. More extensive details on this role will be shared as part of the Centennial Celebration at Academy 2022 in San Diego when influential leaders of the profession will be recognized.

Quintero’s accomplishments have not gone unnoticed by his peers, and he has been recognized many times throughout his career. Some notable awards include the American Academy of Optometry’s Eminent Service Award and the Texas Optometric Association’s Educator of the Year and Optometrist of the Year awards.

Today he continues to teach at UHCO and provide patient care as a therapeutic optometrist at Lakeshore Eye Care in Houston along with his daughter Michele Quintero, OD, who is a therapeutic optometrist, optometric glaucoma specialist, and Diplomate of the American Board of Optometry.

So what’s next?

“It’s been fun, and it’s still fun,” he said. “People ask when I’m going to hang it up. I answer, when I can’t walk anymore and can’t remember where I’m supposed to be. I’m going to keep going.”