

» MISSISSIPPI LEADERS by Martin Willoughby

# Vision for success

## Jeffreys keeps eye on the future

**M**y father was a pitcher in the New York Yankees minor league system, so I grew up a passionate Yankees fan. I learned all about the lives of famous Yankees ballplayers including the iconic Babe Ruth. I remember that when he retired he not only held the record for single season home runs (60), career home runs (714), but also strikeouts (1,330). Ruth once said, "Never let the fear of striking out get in your way." Leaders face a similar challenge. There are always large obstacles in the journey of success. Often uncertainty and change lies just around the corner. However, leaders summon the courage to press ahead and move down the path of pursuing their dreams.

Winston Churchill observed, "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities ... because it is the quality which guarantees all others."

The health care business is in a seismic state of change. For physicians it is a challenging and stressful time. Dr. Kirk Jeffreys, owner of EyeCare Professionals and Eyebar Optical Shop, has pursued his dream in spite of the challenges to build a very successful practice. Jeffreys is a native of Yazoo City, but moved to Jackson in junior high. Upon graduation from Jackson Prep, he continued his studies at Mississippi State followed by medical school at UMMC. Jeffreys' professional training in ophthalmology includes an internal medicine internship and ophthalmology residency at UMMC as well as a basic sciences course in ophthalmology from Harvard University. During his residency, Dr. Connie McCaa, M.D., became a valued mentor. He shared, "She showed me tremendous work ethic and a true compassion for her patients. I have modeled many aspects of my own practice after her approach."

His real on the job training as a leader

began when bought a practice and went out on his own in 2002. Jeffreys said, "I had never owned or run a business before, so I had to convince the five retained employees that I was a person of high integrity that they would enjoy working with. They bought in and helped show me the way. Together we have grown to where we are today — a thriving practice with 16 employees."

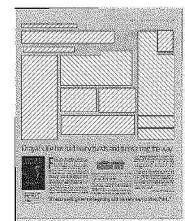
After 10 years in practice, Jeffreys faced a very difficult decision.

He had the opportunity to expand into a new location, doubling his office space and adding a new optical shop. He noted, "While requiring significant investment, particularly during a down economic time, it provided me with a tremendous opportunity for growth. I had to trust my abilities to overcome any concerns over such an aggressive move. Jeffreys said that he learned that, "You can't let fear and uncertainty prevent you from achieving your goals."

As a young child, Jeffreys was influenced by a great uncle who had an ophthalmology practice in New Orleans. He said, "My family made annual trips to New Orleans for our eye exams. Observing how he related with patients and how respected he was made a huge impression on me. Since my early years, I had ophthalmology in the back of my mind, and as I progressed through medical school, it was always at the top of my list." Jeffreys held onto his dream and continues to take bold moves to pursue it. For example, he recently added a surgery center and a LASIK center. As leaders, we can relate to these "fork in the road" moments where we have to summons the courage to press ahead. General George S. Patton once said, "Courage is fear holding



Martin Willoughby



on a minute longer.” Sometimes, like Dr. Jeffreys, we just have to hold on a minute longer and persevere even when are fears try to hold us back.

**Martin Willoughby is a business consultant** and regular contributing columnist for the *Mississippi Business Journal*. He serves as Chief Operating Officer of Butler Snow Advisory Services, LLC and can be reached at [martin.willoughby@butlersnow.com](mailto:martin.willoughby@butlersnow.com).

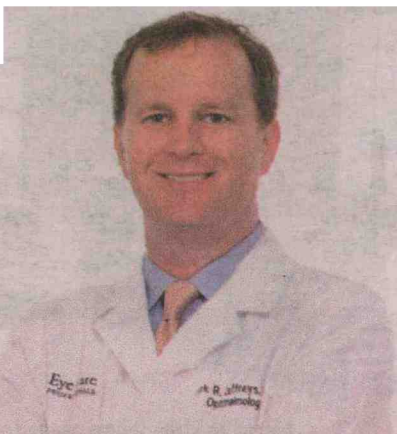
### Up Close With ... **Dr. Kirk Jeffreys**

**Title:** Owner, EyeCare Professionals and Eyebar Optical Shop

**First Job:** "I had a paper route in junior high."

**Favorite Books:** *E-myth Revisited* (Michael Gerber); *Good to Great* (Jim Collins).

**Proudest Moment as a Leader:** "Grand opening of our new location"



**"You can't let fear and uncertainty prevent you from achieving your goals"**

**Dr. Kirk Jeffreys**

Owner, EyeCare Professionals and Eyebar Optical Shop