As their parents did, Beaver Dam's offspring add input to a scientific study of the senses.

LIFESTYLES/C1

Children of participants of past Beaver Dam studies of vision and hearing are helping researchers understand more about age-related problems of the senses. Saturday's Lifestyles section reports on the Beaver Dam Offspring Study and how city residents are contributing to science.
Continuing a vision

Beaver Dam's offspring are part of a new scientific study of the senses and lifestyle risk factors for these conditions. Participants in the BOSS will learn about their senses and general health. They will have their vision, hearing, smell and taste tested. Photographs of each participant's eyes and tongue will be taken. Cardiovascular health will be checked by measuring blood pressure and using ultrasound to scan carotid arteries. Blood samples will be used to identify cholesterol levels, to check for diabetes and to keep for genetic studies. Height and weight will be measured and many health-related questions
Health, the Beaver Dam Offspring Study (BOSS) is a landmark research study investigating four of the five senses — vision, hearing, smell and taste — and other health measures such as cardiac health.

The study started this past June and will continue into early 2008, with about 4,500 people expected to participate. Following on the heels of the well-established Beaver Dam Eye Study and the Beaver Dam Epidemiology of Hearing Study — collectively called the Beaver Dam Studies — the BOSS looks to the next generation, the offspring of those who took part in the first studies, to tackle age-related health problems.

The BOSS will provide scientists the information to compare the prevalences of eye disease, hearing loss and other sensory impairments between the World War II and post-World War II generations.

In addition, the study will identify genetic, environmental

Examiner Tom Dugolenski takes a photograph of the lens of study participant Shirley Mork's eye.

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Scientists have found that the way we live, our environments and our genes help determine the onset of sensory disorders and vascular diseases.

With dramatic changes in lifestyle, socioeconomic conditions, and childhood and early-adult exposures that have occurred in the United States during the last century, it is important to study the post-World War II generation to determine their risk of sensory disorders compared to earlier generations.

This will help us prepare for the growing demands on the healthcare system as babyboomers age.

Since everyone eligible for the study is invited to participate, rather than only those who have health problems or seek medical care, the study's

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results will provide valuable information on how many people are affected by these conditions and why some people are affected by certain conditions while others are not.

Since 1987, when Beaver Dam was chosen for the first eye study, there has been strong support of the studies by community leaders, civic groups, medical-care providers and citizens. This community's off-spring now has the opportunity to help uncover ways to prevent and treat the major causes of sensory loss as we age and help people here and around the world prevent eye diseases, hearing loss and other age-related conditions.

Shirley T. Mork of Oconomowoc, a recent study participant, said that the BOSS "is a great way to study health and health problems."

“Everyone [from the study] was so nice. It was a great experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity," Mork said.

Currently, study participants are seen on fourth floor of the Beaver Dam Community Hospital.

Following construction of the new hospital, the study offices will relocate to the Warren Street building located directly behind the new hospital.

Examinations take place nearly every day including around holidays to accommodate busy schedules and those visiting from out of town.

Each participant is invited to be seen once during the three-year, baseline study. Those born between 1924 and 1992, and with at least one of their parents having had participated in the Beaver Dam Studies, may be eligible to participate in the BOSS, whether they now live in Beaver Dam or elsewhere.

For more information about the study, please call 800 253-0986.