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## NNB News : 2013 : 10 : 15 : The Former Rays Optometrist

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October 15, 2013 [Midtown](#) [No comments](#)

## THE FORMER RAYS OPTOMETRIST

BY ALEXA NEWSOME

*NNB Student Reporter*

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Joel Marantz is an optometrist who has provided services to Midtown for almost 50 years. He is willing to see anyone and also treats some of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball players.

Marantz began treating the players from the Rays in 1996, before they were an official team. Mike Riley, head of the Rays medical staff at the time, asked Marantz to be one of the official optometrists for the players. He treated every major league and minor league player and conducted complete exams for each player throughout the year. He saw the major league players during spring training.

"Most of the players don't even realize that they need their vision corrected," Marantz said. "But once they put in their new contacts, they notice a huge difference."

Because he was an official optometrist for the players, he was constantly out of his office. He stayed on the official medical staff until 2004, because he didn't like spending that much time away from his practice. Now, he sees only 5 to 10 players each year. Patient confidentiality restricts the mentioning of any names.

"I think the worst vision a player had was 20/60 vision, which means you have to be 20 feet away from an object to see it clearly, while a person with 20/20 vision could see that object clearly from 60 feet away," he said. "He was a pitcher who never had contacts or had his vision tested and couldn't read the hand signals from the catcher. The catcher had to paint his fingernails white, so that the pitcher could see the signals."

Marantz said that the catcher was relieved when the pitcher finally went to get corrective lenses.

Marantz is a major Rays fan and has been a season ticket holder from the beginning, in 1998. He is passionate about his business.

"Seeing is a big part of anything you do," he said. "You need it to drive, to read important documents, to study, and to catch a baseball that is coming at you from across the field."

Marantz started his business in 1966 and has been in the same building at 929 First Ave. N., St. Petersburg, Fla. He always tries to give back to the community and donates to multiple charities in the area. His practice accepts multiple vision insurance plans, including Medicaid, and also offers a 10 percent discount to patients who have vision insurance that they do not accept. He carries a wide variety of glasses and contact lenses at his location to cater to each of his patients' wants and needs. Patients are able to stop in without an appointment if they need their glasses adjusted or have any questions.

A majority of his patients live and work in Midtown. Kathy Bellas has been one of his patients since



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Dr. Marantz decorates his office with an engraved baseball bat given to him by the Rays and an autographed baseball.

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1981. When she started seeing him, she worked at Florida National Bank, which is now Wells Fargo, in Midtown.

"I've been a loyal patient for 32 years," Bellas said. "At first, it was just convenient to go there."

After becoming self-employed and moving out of the Midtown area to Pinellas Park, Fla., she refuses to see anyone else.

"It's a lot farther away," she said. "But I don't care about convenience anymore. I really like his personality and he is so thorough in his examinations, so I refuse to see anyone else. I've been sending my three kids to see him since they were little. They're now in their 20s and still see him."

Bellas recommends Marantz to anyone who is in need of an optometrist.

Routine eye exams are important for everyone, especially for professional athletes. Besides finding out your prescription for contact lenses or glasses, the optometrist can determine whether you have any common eye diseases. Marantz will continue to serve Midtown and give back to the community.

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