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The 'eyes' have it:

Former Clearfield resident molds artificial eyes

Michael Hughes is an artist and an Ocularist, in the business of making people look and feel good about themselves.

The son of Ben and Margaret Hughes of Clearfield, he lives in northern Virginia and has been interviewed in newspapers in that area and they have praised him for his prowess.

Mr. Hughes is a molder of artificial eyes and he remarks that although the situations surrounding his work are often tragic, there is a satisfaction in knowing that he is helping people feel good about themselves.

Along that theme, he says he's no miracle worker . . . he can't restore a patient's sight, but he can do much to improve their self-image.

He says to some people, having a glass eye is no big deal but to others it's "devastating."

He says, "I have to take the middle road."

Each eye is handmade individually for the patient, he says, and after the initial visits there are follow-ups for maintenance and such.

He is one of two ocularists in Virginia, has been in the business for 16 years and sees about 8,000 patients in his practice.

He and his family live in Vienna, VA., about 15 miles southwest of Washington, D.C.

He has an office in Vienna as well as offices in Richmond and Roanoke and at the University of Virginia Hospital at Charlottesville.

Not only does he make glass eyes, his education also has him trained in making noses, ears, and other facial features damaged by accident or diseases.

He sees from 15–20 patients each day.

He is a graduate of Clearfield Area High School, attended Penn State University, concentrating in fine arts and has a degree in maxiofacial prosthetics from Temple University, in conjunction with the Veterans Administration in Wilmington, Delaware.

He credits much of his success to his Clearfield High School art teacher Gary Mullen, who he says encouraged him. He says Mr. Mullen never discouraged anyone, he was so nice to everyone. "Anyone interested in art...he was right there."

He also heaps praise on his father, Ben Hughes, a self-made man and the operator of a dental lab for many years.

"He's the greatest...I told him if he was 10 years younger, I'd hire him to work for me."

Michael Hughes and his wife, Aileen have two children: Neil, 14, and Elizabeth, 6.