

PixelOptics takes show on the road

The Roanoke County company will debut its auto-focus eyeglasses Friday in New York.

By [Duncan Adams](#) – Roanoke.com

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Optometrist and inventor Ron Blum acknowledged Wednesday that he and his PixelOptics team might experience a few butterflies Friday during a product unveiling in New York City.

After a decade of research and development, the high-tech company based in Roanoke County will offer the optical trade a public demonstration of what PixelOptics describes as the "world's first electronic eyewear."

The presentation will occur during the International Vision Expo at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

Blum, one of the region's most prominent entrepreneurs, is PixelOptics' chairman, president and chief executive officer.

"We will be taking the sheet off the artwork we've been working on for 10 years," Blum said.

Butterflies, maybe. But not fear, he said.

Feedback about the electronic lenses has been positive from all corners of the industry, Blum said, including development partners, eye care professionals and people who have worn the glasses, he said.

PixelOptics says its patented, auto-focusing eyeglasses promise significant improvements when compared with bifocals and progressive addition lenses. All three target presbyopia, a condition that begins to affect near focus for many people in middle age.

The company says the eyeglasses auto-focus faster than the blink of an eye by employing chemistry, electricity and optics. Vision reportedly remains clear whether viewing objects near, far or in between.

And PixelOptics insists that the package of lenses and frames will be attractive.

Tuesday's edition of The Wall Street Journal featured an article about a brand of eyeglasses called TruFocals, sold by Zoom Focus Eyewear. The TruFocals rely on a "nosepiece slider" to adjust focus, and the story reported the glasses "are far from fashionable."

It added, "The fashion-conscious might want to wait for PixelOptics' new electronic eyeglasses." The article suggested that PixelOptics' glasses will cost from about \$1,000 to \$1,200 a pair. PixelOptics cites a probable price range of \$800 to \$1,000.

Blum has assembled a team of executives and engineers with wide experience in the optical industry. And PixelOptics has attracted millions of dollars in investment. Partners include Panasonic Shikoku Electronics of Japan.

Blum said PixelOptics anticipates a September launch of its eyeglasses in test markets in North Carolina, Virginia and Washington, D.C. A national launch is planned for early 2011, he said.

During Friday's event, PixelOptics will announce the brand name for the electro-active eyeglasses and describe the plan for their manufacture and distribution.