

Inaugural Issue

The Spectacle

A publication of the

Lions Sight Program
at the
University of Minnesota

Minnesota Lions Eye Bank

Lions Children's Eye Clinic

Lions Research Building

The MAC



Winter 2003



Eye Bank Gets Facelift

The Minnesota Lions Eye Bank has a fresh look! Twenty-five years is a long time to sport the same outfit, so the eye bank staff and board of directors decided to make a change.

Eye bank staff were asked what qualities the eye bank exemplifies. Favorite responses were respect, compassion, strength, trust and hope. A designer brought together all of these attributes and created this representation.

Also modified was the eye bank signature color. Yes, it's still purple, but what a difference! The eye bank now has



Minnesota Lions Eye Bank

donned a subtler and more sophisticated hue, a pigment that conveys (you guessed it) respect-compassion-strength-trust-hope.

Finally, to complete the new image, the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank redesigned their letterhead; updated their eye donation brochure; revamped the displays used at health fairs and conventions; and improved the information packet that is sent out to donor families. The eye bank also has plans for two new brochures. The first is a guide to correspondence between corneal recipients and eye donor families. The second contains information on eye tissue recovery, processing, distribution and safety standards and is intended for corneal surgeons and their patients.

Two thousand and three has been a very busy year at the eye bank!

SOS from the Eye Bank

Drivers Wanted

For more than forty years the Minnesota State Patrol has been assisting the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank to transport eye tissue over the 135,000 miles of Minnesota roads. Despite the State Patrol's long-standing support, budget and staffing cutbacks are bringing their services to an end, and the eye bank must find a way to replace their participation.

Given the size of the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank service area, transportation is always a serious issue. The eye bank serves the entire state of Minnesota plus a few hospitals in Fargo and in western Wisconsin, for a total of 132 hospitals. After every donation, whether it takes place in Hallock, Grand Marais or Marshall, the eyes need to reach the eye bank in the heart of the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus for preservation without delay. Eye tissue is considered non-transportable if preservation does not occur within 12 to 15 hours.

"We sincerely support the commendable work of the Lions and the eye bank," said Major Mike Asleson of the Minnesota State Patrol. "Unfortunately, in these tight times with serious and fatal injury crashes out of control and with limited staff, we have to work hard on our most important role—preventing crashes through enforcement." Asleson added, "Our need to change the level of service we provide the eye bank is based on a refocus of our mission, not a lack of support for your mission."

Effective immediately, the State Patrol can no longer

transport eyes into the metro area between 10:00 p.m. and 6 a.m. Soon State Patrol will no longer transport eyes at all.

"The Minnesota State Patrol is involved in roughly 500 eye transports per year," said Brian Philippy, lab manager for the eye bank. "That's nearly half of our donors. Replacing their services has become the highest priority."

Fortunately, other eye banks have overcome similar transportation dilemmas with the help of the Lions. The models provided by the Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin, the Iowa Lions Eye Bank, the Lions Eye Bank of Oregon, and several others look promising for the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank.

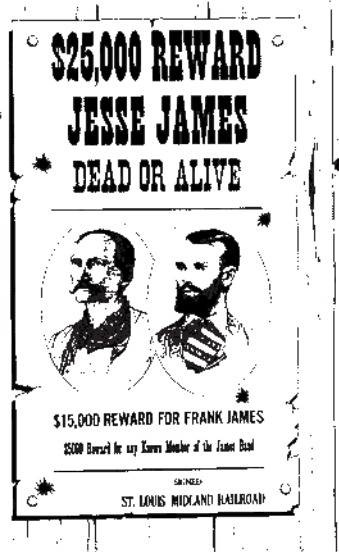
"A number of eye banks in the country regularly depend upon their Lions to transport eye tissue from the site of a donation to the eye bank," said Philippy. "The Minnesota Lions have created and maintained one of the leading eye banks in the country. It's time to evolve

with today's changing needs. We must immediately create a successful Lions courier program."

The eye bank will work with their board of directors to create an alternate Lions-based transportation system.



Please consider becoming a Minnesota Lions Eye Bank Eye Transporter.



Wanted: Lions Transport System Coordinator

The Minnesota Lions Eye Bank seeks an enthusiastic, detail-oriented Lion to organize and coordinate the forthcoming Lions Transport System (see article above), a crucial and challenging role! Position requires a significant time commitment at onset of program. Volunteer must be capable of delegating tasks efficiently and appropriately.

Contact Raylene at 1-866-887-4448.

Donor Coordinators

Superheros of the Eye Bank

The Minnesota Lions Eye Bank facilitated 955 eye donations in the year 2002. For every one of those donations, the eye bank's resourceful and competent donation coordinators followed approximately 45 policies and procedures to ensure that 1) families are treated with compassion, 2) donors are treated with respect and 3) eyes recovered are medically safe and of suitable quality for transplant or research. And all of this is done under very tight time constraints. Only fifteen hours can elapse from the time of the donor's death to the time the corneas are removed from the eye and preserved.

A donor coordinator's job demands diverse talents. A coordinator must be able to speak to grieving families appropriately and with sympathy. A coordinator needs the technical knowledge to read and assess patient charts and

to medically evaluate eye tissue. A coordinator also has to be deft enough to surgically remove the cornea from the eye globe.

In addition to these specialized duties of scientist, counselor and artist rolled into one, a coordinator performs countless administrative tasks for each donation: requesting medical records, writing detailed progress notes, coordinating with other donation agencies and the funeral home, locating an enucleator, setting up transportation. And the list goes on.

The job description for the donor coordinator (or assistant scientist, as the University terms the position) begins with the sentence, "The primary responsibility of this position is to assess and respond to the daily needs of the eye bank lab." Who would guess that so much is contained in this one short phrase?

Meet the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank Coordinators

Natalie Buckman

A student worker for the eye bank in the early nineties, Natalie has returned as a donation coordinator. She has a double major in biology and Russian and spent 18 months in the United States Peace Corps, teaching English in Lithuania.

Veronique Grimes

Veronique has been with the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank longer than any other employee. She has enucleated for the eye bank since 1988 and has been the Metro Procurement Supervisor since 1996. Veronique is a Certified Eye Bank Technician and a Certified Ophthalmic Medical Technician.

Gene Keating

Before becoming a donor coordinator, Gene enucleated for the eye bank. Other hats he has worn include realtor, EMT and volunteer firefighter.

Mamie Loiselet

Mamie is a registered nurse with seventeen-plus years of experience. She has worked with the Lions in her community, doing fundraising, health screening and counseling.

Tim Noren

Tim has a 17-year history in the EMT field, both as a paramedic and as an ambulance manager. With schooling in Biometry (statistical analysis of biological observations and phenomena), his last position was as operations director of a medical transportation company.

Brian Philippy

Prior to his appointment as Lab Manager, Brian held the positions of enucleator, distribution coordinator and donor coordinator at the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank. He has a BS in both Chemical Engineering and Chemistry and is a Certified Eye Bank Technician.

Jennifer Sundberg

Jennifer has ten years experience in healthcare. She brings a creative touch to the lab with her entertaining drawings and homemade candles. Jennifer procures bone and tissue for American Red Cross Tissue Services in addition to her work as a donor coordinator.

Nicole Wenisch

Nicole Wenisch has been working in the healthcare field for over a decade. Before joining the eye bank in 2001, she worked five years as a patient coordinator in a cancer center.

Thanksgiving for Vision Celebrated

On October 11, 431 Minnesota Lions and Lioness members, corneal recipients, donor families, eye bank staff and University of Minnesota Department of Ophthalmology faculty gathered at the Earle Brown Center in Brooklyn Center, Minn., for *Thanksgiving for Vision 2003*. This annual event celebrates restored sight and the accomplishments of Minnesota Lionism.

The Earle Brown Center is a beautiful facility. Located on the site of a one-time horse farm, many of the original buildings are preserved.

Thanksgiving for Vision was housed in the old carriage hall.

Guests arrived to a relaxing social hour. Coffee flowed. Old friends renewed ties. New friends were made.

At 10:00 the educational symposium began. The symposium was presented by Department of Ophthalmology faculty members. Each shared a brief summary of current research projects. Many eye disorders depend on research for a cure, and Lions have always been strong



supporters of research at the University. Today's laboratory experiment is tomorrow's clinical treatment.

After the symposium, guests had the opportunity to bid on silent auction items. A neon beer sign. An autographed Vikings cap. Gift certificates for dinner, lodging, golf, the theater. Teddy bears. Afghans. China. There was something for everyone. And the good-natured bidding wars raised more than \$4,000 for the Lions Sight Program!

The culmination of *Thanksgiving for Vision* was the luncheon program. In addition to enjoying a fabulous meal (how good was that blueberry flan?), guests were treated to moving speeches by a donor wife and the parents of a young corneal recipient. The program closed with a tradition, Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." This year Lion Ruthie Agman sang and accompanied herself.

Every year, *Thanksgiving for Vision* educates, entertains and inspires. Pouring rain could not

dampen the spirits of departing guests, and they feeling that, truly, this is a wonderful world.

2003 *Thanksgiving for Vision*

The Promise of Research Symposium

Jay Krachmer, M.D.
Emcee

Linda McLoon, Ph.D.
Eye Muscles and Disease

Stephen Christiansen, M.D.
Update on Pediatric Eye Research
at the University

Timothy Olsen, M.D.
The MAC:
Positioning for the Future

Andrew Huang, M.D.
Corneal Genetic Research

Light Amid Darkness

Unlike many self-sufficient people, Ruthie Agman does not have a problem requesting and accepting help. If she didn't have assistance crossing the street, Ruthie might veer out into traffic, so she doesn't worry about being a nuisance.

Blind since birth, Ruthie has had no choice but to depend on others to learn, grow and survive. "It wasn't always easy," she said. "But asking for a helping hand is a lot easier than going it alone."

This philosophy has gotten Ruthie through many battles. In 1997 came another.

Ruthie noticed a bulge forming on her right eye. Not long after, a similar growth surfaced on her left eye. She developed a new sensitivity to light, and exposure to the sun caused her extreme pain. The pain was becoming unbearable when, at the 2001 *Thanksgiving for Vision* event, Ruthie was motivated by Dr. Doughman's symposium talk to ask for help.

Dr. Doughman sent Ruthie to Dr. Andrew Harrison at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Harrison recognized that Ruthie's corneas would eventually rupture. To prevent this, and to relieve the great pain that Ruthie was in, Dr. Harrison, removed both of Ruthie's natural eyes and replaced them with prostheses. Another battle won; another layer added to her already-thick skin.

Ruthie attributes her resilience, in part, to her sense of humor. "Once a year, I get a brighter outlook on life," she

joked. "I get my prostheses cleaned and polished."

Her hope is to put people at ease. In allowing a stranger to help guide her onto the bus or around the supermarket, Ruthie often instructs, "I'll take your elbow now...but I promise to give it back!" With such a positive and humorous approach, Ruthie illustrates utter humility. She is more than her blindness. She finds a way, without seeing those she encounters, to connect with the human race on a very profound level.

Ruthie is quick to show her gratitude for the care and nurturing she received from her family growing up. "I had the best grandmother a blind person could ever have," Ruthie beamed. "She wanted me to experience life. She showed me what a potato felt like."

Today, although living on a fixed income and suffering from debilitating arthritis in both knees, Ruthie lives an abundant life of service, giving of herself to a community that continues to encourage her. Not only does she assist the visually impaired, but she also educates the sighted world, sharing her experience and offering suggestions for working with the blind.

Ruthie's life has been an uphill climb. She's stumbled through rough patches, always emerging stronger, with a more ardent sense of duty. She credits her family, her friends, and her Savior, Jesus Christ, for her gift to giving to others. Through them, she sees the beauty of this world, and she continues to climb.

Lions Clubs Tour University

Fun Had by All

Each spring and each fall, two to three hundred Lion and Lioness members gather at the University of Minnesota to tour the Lions 5M Hearing Center, the

ogy. At the Hearing Center, guests were treated to information about the Balance Lab, the Otopathology Lab, the Lions Voice Lab and the Cochlear Implant Program. A



Tour goer examines Helen Keller Award Board in Children's Eye Clinic

special experience was hearing cochlear implant patient, Jack Maddio.

In Ophthalmology, tour groups gathered facts about pediatric ophthalmology; the services offered at the Low Vision Center; and what is happening at the MAC Center. They also got a crash course on eye banking and observed a corneal transplant demonstration.

On every side, Lions members saw the equipment, doctors, scientists and programs that their contributions make possible. Jack Maddio and the corneal transplant recipient tour guides were powerful proof of how Lions improve the lives of individuals each and every day.

Tour invitations will be mailed in January. Please RSVP ASAP, so your club can take part in a memorable day. Space is limited!

Minnesota Lions Eye Bank, the Lions Children's Eye Clinic and the Lions Macular Degeneration Research and Rehabilitation Center.

Much is happening at the University, and the Lions have a right to be proud of their sight and hearing programs, all of which bear the Lions name. Every Lions tour is packed with intriguing sights, top-notch information and lots of fellowship.

The September tour began with coffee and rolls and welcomes from Lion Vern Dokter, chair of the Hearing Foundation; Kirsten Coverstone, director of the Lions Universal Newborn Hearing and Screening Program; Lion Ken Steies, chair of the eye bank board of directors; and Dr. Jay Krachmer, chair of the Department of Ophthalmology.

Next, participants broke into small groups and headed up to 8th floor Otolaryngology and 9th floor Ophthalmol-



Mary Ruff talks about the Visual Rehabilitation Center

Clubs Participating in September 2003 Tour

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Aitkin Lions | Crosslake Ideal Whitefish Area Lions | North Suburban Lions |
| Albert Lea Lakeview Lions | Ellendale Lions | Rochester Morning Pride Lions |
| Albert Lea Noon Lions | Fridley Five Star Lions | Sauk Rapids Riverside Lions |
| Apple Valley Lions | Hastings Rivertown Lions | Watson Lions |
| Askov Area Lions | Minneapolis Hiawatha Lions | Westbrook Lions |
| Avon Lions | Monticello Lions | White Bear Lake Lions |
| Barnesville Thursday Nite Lions | Mounds View Lions | Willmar Noon Lions |
| Buffalo Lions | New London Lions | |

Helen Keller Sight Awards

Helen Keller's speech at the 1925 Lions International Convention has passed into Lion lore. The phrase "Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness" is now nearly synonymous with the Lions motto "We Serve."

Born in 1880, Helen Keller contracted an illness at the age of 18 months that robbed her of sight and hearing. For five long years, she lived in a dark and silent world until Anne Sullivan became her teacher and companion. Sullivan gave to Helen Keller the gift of light and language. Sullivan gave to the world the gift of Helen Keller.

Clubs may bestow a Helen Keller Award by making a \$1,000 contribution to the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank, Minnesota Lions Children's Eye Clinic, the Minnesota Lions Research Fund, or the MAC.

Helen Keller's achievements are remarkable for any person, but they are absolutely astounding for a deaf and blind woman born before the arrival of women's suffrage and before significant consideration was given to the rights of the disabled.

Helen Keller received her Bachelor of Arts degree cum laude from Radcliffe College in 1904. She became a published author. She was an ardent lecturer and human rights advocate. She was awarded the United States' highest honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and served as a spokesperson and ambassador for the American Foundation for the Blind until her death in 1968. It was in this capacity that Helen Keller addressed the Lions.

Looking at all that Helen Keller has accomplished, it is small wonder that the Lions are inspired by this exceptional woman. It is quite natural that the Minnesota Lions developed the Helen Keller Sight Award as a tribute to her.

Helen Keller Awards are given to individuals who have distinguished themselves on behalf of sight. Established in 1992, more than 1,300 Helen Keller awards have now been presented to Lion and Lioness club members, non-Lion individuals, businesses and organizations. In 2002 alone, 338 awards were given out to persons who demonstrated caring and commitment to their communities and to the Lions sight mission.

An award recipient receives a beautiful plaque and lapel pin. The recipient is recognized on an award board in the Lions Children's Eye Clinic. Both the donor and the recipient have the satisfaction of supporting worthwhile Lions projects.

For more information about Helen Keller Awards, contact eye bank secretaries Bob and Deb Harms at (320) 398-2932.

Helen Keller's Speech
1925 International Convention
Cedar Point, Ohio USA
June 30, 1925

Dear Lions and Ladies:

I suppose you have heard the legend that represents opportunity as a capricious lady, who knocks at every door but once, and if the door isn't opened quickly, she passes on, never to return. And that is as it should be. Lovely, desirable ladies won't wait. You have to go out and grab 'em.

I am your opportunity. I am knocking at your door. I want to be adopted. The legend doesn't say what you are to do when several beautiful opportunities present themselves at the same door. I guess you have to choose the one you love best. I hope you will adopt me. I am the youngest here, and what I offer you is full of splendid opportunities for service.

The American Foundation for the Blind is only four years old. It grew out of the imperative needs of the blind, and was called into existence by the sightless themselves. It is national and international in scope and in importance. It represents the best and most enlightened thought on our subject that has been reached so far. Its object is to make the lives of the blind more worthwhile everywhere by increasing their economic value and giving them the joy of normal activity.

Try to imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly stricken blind today. Picture yourself stumbling and groping at noonday as in the night; your work, your independence, gone. In that dark world wouldn't you be glad if a friend took you by the hand and said, "Come with me and I will teach you how to do some of the things you used to do when you could see"? That is just the kind of friend the American Foundation is going to be to all the blind in this country if seeing people will give it the support it must have.

You have heard how through a little word dropped from the fingers of another, a ray of light from another soul touched the darkness of my mind and I found myself, found the world, found God. It is because my teacher learned about me and broke through the dark, silent imprisonment which held me that I am able to work for myself and for others. It is the caring we want more than money. The gift without the sympathy and interest of the giver is empty. If you care, if we can make the people of this great country care, the blind will indeed triumph over blindness.

The opportunity I bring to you, Lions, is this: To foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness; no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you Lions, you who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?

I thank you.

Construction Begins on Translational Research Facility

On November 4, over one hundred people gathered in the rain and chill to watch Molly Nash break ground for the new Translational Research Building on the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus. Molly, a nine-year-old whose life was saved by stem cells from her

younger brother Adam's umbilical cord, is a perfect example of translational research.

Translational research turns theory to reality. It converts basic science into cures and treatments, connects scientists to patients. Much of the work at the Translational Research

Facility will involve genetics and molecular biology and focus on ways to fight cancer, heart disease, diabetes, muscular dystrophy, hemophilia, Alzheimer's, HIV-AIDS and other medical dilemmas.

The Department of Ophthalmology has a keen interest in the new facility. "Our goal is to correlate the basic science expertise from those at the Lions Research Building with the clinical expertise of the vitreoretinal physicians at the University," said Dr. Timothy Olsen, director of the Macular Degeneration Research and Rehabilitation Center. "The translational research facility will help foster and strengthen the relationship between our clinical and research staff and is imperative to our mission of bringing new therapies for the treatment of macular degeneration."

Funded by state bonds and private donations, the facility should be completed in about 18 months. It will aid the University's efforts to be in the forefront of biomedical research and development.



Ticket to Sight in Ecuador

A team of 20 VOSH (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity) volunteers, led by Lion Bob Boeding, former eye bank board member, traveled to Portoviejo, Ecuador this past June to provide used eyeglasses to the poorer people of the community.

By the time volunteers arrived on the first day of the clinic, hundreds of folks had gathered in their Sunday best, each standing patiently in line and clutching their color-coded ticket as if it were gold. And for most, it was better. It was their ticket to sight.

A similar scene greeted the volunteers each of the four days of the clinic, where the team, including two VOSH optometrists and Dr. Robert Letson, retired University of Minnesota professor and pediatric ophthalmologist, examined the eyes of 2,500 people.

Most exams were done with a computerized auto-refractor, but Dr. Letson worked with a local pediatric ophthalmologist on special cases, such as strabismus or cataracts.

One such special case was 10-year-old Gema, who has a blood vessel tumor on her right eye. The tumor causes the eye to turn outward, and Gema needs surgery to correct this condition. The surgery is complex, involving the removal of bone tissue along the inside of the eye.

Dr. Letson and others are working to bring Gema and her mother to the University of Minnesota for the procedure. The Rotary Club of Portoviejo, largely responsible for organizing the mission trip, has already taken care of travel expenses.

"I'm anxious for the girl's sake," said Bob. "We're try-

ing to give her a better quality of life."

The sad reality is that many other Gemas exist in and around Ecuador and other underdeveloped countries. Thankfully, the Lions and organizations like VOSH are committed to improving the lives of the visually-impaired. "It's a service that's really needed," said Boeding.



Gema, a 10-year-old Ecuadorian girl, needs surgery to remove a blood vessel tumor.

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Articles may be copied and are available in alternate formats.

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2004 Calendar

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|-------------|--|
| March 27 | Lions Tour of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology |
| May 8 | Macular Degeneration Symposium |
| October 9 | Thanksgiving for Vision |
| November 13 | Lions Tour of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology |