

Spring/Summer, 2011

MIDWEST
EYE-BANKS
DEDICATED TO THE RESTORATION OF SIGHT

VISION



FROM TRAGEDY TO INSPIRATION

For Juliet Culp, the tragic loss of her 28-year-old brother was a call to action during National Donor Sabbath.

ILLINOIS EYE-BANK • ILLINOIS EYE-BANK, WATSON GAILEY • LIONS EYE BANK OF NEW JERSEY • MICHIGAN EYE-BANK

Inside:

Fall, 2011: Vision goes local in New Jersey, Illinois and Michigan

Remembering Eye-Bank founder Dr. John Henderson

Think you're too old to become a donor? 90-year-old transplant recipient and registered donor says otherwise

Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey builds strong relationships through Community Partners program

Michigan Organ Donor Registry gets a boost from area hospital

Cornea transplants keep Illinois mother of five connected to her life and family



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Midwest Eye-Banks is a 501(c)(3), independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. Through our locations in Illinois, Michigan and New Jersey, we recover, evaluate and distribute eye tissue for transplantation. Our Eye and Vision Research Program supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions. We also provide public and professional education on topics related to eye, organ and tissue donation.



Cover photo by Michael Shuster
www.shupictures.com

Eye-Bank's *Vision* publication retooled to support local identities and relationships

In an effort to better serve local communities, Midwest Eye-Banks announced a change in its organizational structure last year.

“Our connection to the communities we serve is paramount to our continued success,” explains Kevin Ross, Midwest Eye-Banks’ President and CEO. “Our ongoing community commitment requires dedicated, local leadership.”

Following the Board and executive leadership model that has been in place at the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey since it became a part of Midwest Eye-Banks as a subsidiary in 2005, the Michigan Eye-Bank and the Illinois Eye-Bank are now headed up by their own Executive Directors, with support from local Boards of Directors. Each subsidiary is responsible for a local Donor and Community Services (DCS) program geared toward the constituents in its service area.

To support these efforts in each community, local versions of this publication – *Vision* – will be published for the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey, the Illinois Eye-Bank and the Michigan Eye-Bank, beginning this fall.

“*Vision* is our organization’s flagship publication,” says Dan Reynolds, Director of Communications for Midwest Eye-Banks. “As we build local identities and community relationships for each eye bank, it only makes sense for each to have its own publications.”



Leaders in your community



Diane Hollingsworth
Executive Director, Illinois Eye-Bank

Diane began working at the Eye-Bank in August, 2010, after eight years at the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, where she served as Director of Medical Education. She also spent 20 years in senior sales and marketing management positions at IBM, Siemens and Rockwell. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Western Michigan University. Diane is an active volunteer for the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, and is a member of the Naperville Noon Lions Club.



Margaret Chaplin
Executive Director, Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey

Margaret has served as LEBNJ’s Executive Director since 2007. Prior to that, she spent 13 years with St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, including seven years as Administrative Director, Professional Services. She has a Master’s degree in Health Services Administration from George Washington University, and has worked in the health care industry for more than 20 years. Margaret is a member of the Summit Lions Club.



Lisa Langley
Executive Director, Michigan Eye-Bank

Lisa has been working at the Eye-Bank since 1989, and was first hired as a Certified Eye Bank Technician. Her role eventually grew into Public and Professional Education Coordinator, and then Community Engagement Manager. In 2009, she was named Administrative Director of the Michigan Eye-Bank and was appointed Executive Director in 2010. Lisa, a Registered Nurse, holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Wayne State University, where she is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Public Administration. Lisa served as President of the Ann Arbor Host Lions Club from July, 2008 through June, 2010.

In Memory:

John W. Henderson, M.D., Ph.D.

Midwest Eye-Banks lost one of its own on January 19, when Michigan Eye-Bank founding surgeon John Woodworth Henderson, M.D., Ph.D. passed away at age 94.

His legacy reaches far beyond those who knew him.

“Dr. Henderson inspired Lions, physicians and the University of Michigan Hospital to work together to build the organization that now restores sight to thousands each year,” says Lisa Langley, Executive Director of the Michigan Eye-Bank. “We see his legacy every day in the eyes of the patients we’ve helped.”

Dr. Henderson was born in Iowa, but lived in South Dakota and California as a child. He arrived in Michigan just after the start of World War II, shortly after his graduation from Northwestern University Medical School, to begin an internship at University of Michigan Hospital.

After the war, funding enabled faculty in the University’s Ophthalmology Department to pursue and strengthen their individual academic interests. Dr. Henderson’s interest was the cornea and the corneal transplantation process. This would later serve as the clinical basis for the formation of the Michigan Eye-Bank.

Dr. Henderson was first approached about eye donation by the Ann Arbor Host Lions Club in 1956, when Ann Arbor pharmaceutical salesman Max Warren learned that he was suffering from an inoperable brain tumor. Though Warren knew he didn’t have long to live, he wanted to help others, so he talked to his brother-in-law, Bob Tilford, who was then-President of the Lions Club, about donating his eyes.

Tilford and the Club’s Sight Restoration Committee Chairman John Paup contacted Dr. Henderson, who was enthusiastic about the idea. Together, they began speaking to Lions Clubs throughout the region and, during the 1957 Lions State Convention, they were able to garner preliminary support for the eye bank concept.

That same year, Dr. Henderson performed a cornea transplant using the first tissue recovered by what would become the Michigan Eye-Bank. His patient was Tom Walker, a 29-year-old husband and father, who suffered from keratoconus. Thanks to his restored sight, Tom was able to continue his career as a photoengraver for the Ann Arbor News.

Intent on making the eye bank program a success, Dr. Henderson and the Ann Arbor Host Lions Club continued to seek support from other Clubs around the state. Dr. Henderson also originated the idea of eye bank substations, establishing a network of surgeons and hospitals to transport eye tissue across the state, and set up what was known as the “eyeball network” of ham radio operators to communicate between stations. He even got the Michigan State Police involved in eye tissue transportation.



“At that time, it was critical to get the tissue to the operating room as quickly as possible,” Langley explains. “Having a network of substations and transportation made it possible to recover and deliver the tissue within the necessary time frame.”

As the Michigan Eye-Bank grew, it became clear that it would need a home of its own. Dr. Henderson, who served as the Chairman of the University of Michigan’s Department of Ophthalmology from 1968 to 1978, came through once again, helping to pave the way for space at the University of Michigan’s Kellogg Eye Center, which was still in development at the time.

Though the Eye-Bank has long since outgrown its original space at Kellogg, Dr. Henderson’s presence is still felt within the walls of its current home in Ann Arbor, where the Ann Arbor Host Lions Club made a generous charitable contribution to name the Michigan Eye-Bank Laboratory in his honor.

“Dr. Henderson was a man who did not wait for others to act,” Langley recalls. “He put himself on the front lines to promote our mission, and it’s with the greatest of pride that we follow in his footsteps.”

Inspired

Young doctor's family honors his memory with unprecedented donor registration during Donor Sabbath

Photo by Michael Shuster
www.shupictures.com



Juliet Culp, donor sister

Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Juliet Culp and her family, 174 people joined the Michigan Organ Donor Registry in just one day.

Their astounding achievement – which occurred as part of National Donor Sabbath this past fall – was driven by a passion inspired by Culp's brother, Dr. Karl Stockhausen, of Northville, Michigan. Stockhausen lost his life to cancer in September, 2009 at age 28. When offered the opportunity to donate his corneas, his family knew that he would have wanted them to say yes.

“Karl's goal in life was to help others,” Juliet remembers. “He just had this... magnetism. Everyone wanted to be around him.”

Stockhausen was a humanitarian who wanted to make a difference through his medical career, which he planned to spend working in third-world countries. He attended the American University of the Caribbean (AUC), and he twice joined surgical teams providing health care in Honduras. He also worked for three months in La Parroquia, Guatemala, assisting in free healthcare clinics for the indigenous community.

As part of his medical training, Stockhausen completed a clinical rotation in infectious diseases in Mumbai, India, a surgical and OB/GYN rotation and a rotation in an HIV outpatient health clinic in London, and several rotations in New York City. He showed a particular passion for learning about international health systems, and made it a personal goal to have a hand in revolutionizing global health care.

Those who knew of his accomplishments never would have guessed Stockhausen was experiencing devastating health problems. At age 24, a rare eye disease known as Acute Multifocal Placoid Pigment Epitheliopathy (AMPPE) left with him blind spots in both his eyes, qualifying him for special provisions in school, such as unlimited time to take tests, but he refused special treatment. Then, at age 26, he was diagnosed with cancer. Still, he persevered without complaint, finishing medical school in 2008 and securing a prestigious



Dr. Karl Stockhausen



In 2002, prior to medical school, Karl joined staff from Henry Ford Hospital on a medical mission to Honduras.



In 2003, Karl climbed the Pinnacle at Joshua Tree National Park in Twentynine Palms, California.



Even while undergoing cancer treatments, Karl, pictured climbing in India in 2008, continued to live his life to the fullest.

Emergency Medicine residency at Einstein/Jacoby Medical Hospital in the Bronx. Unfortunately, his cancer worsened, and he was unable to begin the residency.

While attending the AUC, Stockhausen had been tasked with writing a letter to the family of a cadaver he'd studied. It was a profound experience for him – one he shared with his tight-knit family, prompting a discussion about what they'd like to happen to their bodies when they died. Stockhausen said he wanted to be a donor, giving whatever organs and tissues he could to those who needed them, and then donating the rest to a medical school for study.

“Having a family discussion about donation wishes is the best way to ensure those wishes will be carried out,” says Alison Claerhout, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Michigan Eye-Bank. “Karl’s experiences inspired him to tell his family what he would want.”

As heartbreaking as his passing was for the people who knew him best, Stockhausen’s family knows that the young man served his purpose while on Earth, according to his mother, Carole Jean Stockhausen.

“We know that Karl was a positive influence, and left this world a better place than what he found,” she says. “He was a giver, not a taker. We are grateful for 28 years with our son and consider him a true blessing. The cancer took his life, but it did not, and could not, take his indomitable spirit.”

To honor Karl’s memory, the Stockhausen family held a Donate Life Station at Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church in Northville during National Donor Sabbath in November – an event Juliet Culp had learned about during the Donor Family Ceremony, hosted by the Michigan Eye-Bank and Gift of Life Michigan.

Determined to make their effort a success, Culp attended all four masses, giving a two-minute speech at each one. By sharing her brother’s story and educating the congregation, she and her family were able to inspire an amazing 174 people to add their names to the Michigan Organ Donor Registry that day.

“I don’t believe in reincarnation, but I do believe [Karl’s donated corneas] are now getting to see beautiful things,” says Culp. “His choice to be a donor was the ultimate gift.”



Photo by Michael Shuster

National Donor Sabbath 2011



Give thanks. Give life.

National Donor Sabbath takes place November 11-13, 2011. For more information, contact the Eye-Bank at (800) 247-7250. If you would like to add your name to the Donor Registry in your state, visit www.IJoined.org.

Local hospital promotes eye, organ and tissue donation through Donor Registry

Rick Hillbom, COO of Oakwood Hospital & Medical Center (OHMC) Outpatient Services & Physician Relations, and Teresa Dalzot, Gift of Life Michigan (GOLM) Liaison, arranged to have Eye-Bank Professional Education Coordinator Carrie Wolverton and GOLM Hospital Development Associate Rebecca Williams visit Maple Heights Retirement Center, where Wolverton first met 90-year-old Pauline Ragland.

“Rick and Teresa have been wonderful champions of donation,” Wolverton says. “It was their idea to have the Michigan Eye-Bank and Gift of Life Michigan visit the retirement center in the Oakwood system.”

Thanks in large part to Hillbom's dedication, OHMC was the leading hospital in Gift of Life Michigan's Donor Drive 2010, with 797 people adding their names to the Michigan Organ Donor Registry because of its efforts.

“As healthcare providers, it is our duty to educate the public about eye, organ and tissue donation, and support all efforts to improve Donor Registry enrollment,” Hillbom says, crediting his organization's “passionate and committed staff” for the impressive Donor Registry numbers. “Sharing donation information with employees, patients, and family members of the Oakwood Healthcare System and our surrounding communities provides for educated donation decisions.”

In addition to OHMC, the entire Oakwood Healthcare System played a major role in Donor Drive 2010. In appreciation of their efforts, Wolverton presented each hospital with a Michigan Eye-Bank Certificate of Recognition during National Eye Donor Month in March.

Never Too Old

Even at age 90, registering to become an eye donor can help to save sight

When Michigan Eye-Bank Professional Education Coordinator Carrie Wolverton visited Maple Heights Retirement Center last October, Pauline Ragland was thrilled to meet her.

Wolverton was there to help Maple Heights residents sign up on the Michigan Organ Donor Registry. And 90-year-old Ragland, having undergone three cornea transplants herself, welcomed the chance to express her gratitude and support for eye, organ and tissue donation.

In her younger years, Ragland recalls, she took her good health for granted. Still, after losing her father, mother and grandmother by the time she reached 16, she was always careful to take care of herself.

“I've lived 90 years,” she muses. “I must have done something right.”

But no matter how healthy a person is, getting older takes a toll. In her early 60s, Ragland was diagnosed with diabetes and, eventually, her eyes began to fail. Her first cornea transplant, in her left eye, did not do as well as her doctor had hoped it would, but the subsequent success of a transplant in her right eye prompted him suggest trying the procedure on the left eye again. Though she is still healing, Ragland reports that the outcome has been positive, and she can see better than she could before.



Pauline Ragland

“Any little help is something to be grateful for,” she says.

After her surgery, Ragland wrote a letter to her donor family, thanking them for the gift their loved one gave her, but she wanted to do more.

“It's a very powerful thing to help a person in a way that could only come from someone's generosity,” she explains. “It has always been my intention to have my body used for something worthwhile.”

According to Wolverton, many older people are unaware that they are eligible to become eye donors, and that their donated eye tissue can make a real difference – regardless of their own eye health.

“I often hear older people say, ‘Why would anybody want my eyes? I'm too old!’” she says. “But that couldn't be farther from the truth. In reality, there is no age limit for eye donors, because donated eye tissue is used for research, education and transplantation. And those uses are equally important in our mission to restore sight.”

Wolverton adds that people of all ages and medical histories should consider themselves potential eye donors. “Eye tissue can often be donated by people whose health conditions might rule out the donation of other organs or tissues,” she explains, “and it's a source of comfort to their families to know that their loved one was able to help in some way.”

Each year, more than 30,000 eyes are donated in the U.S. for research and education involving glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration and other sight disorders. These studies advance the knowledge of causes and effects of specific eye conditions, leading to new treatments and cures.

“Research is so important,” Wolverton emphasizes. “Only about 10 percent of blinding eye conditions can be helped by corneal transplantation. For people struggling with the remaining 90 percent, research projects can offer hope that they, too, may be able to experience the joy of a second chance for sight.”

Ragland's passion for donation is something that Wolverton will carry with her as she educates people about donation.

“Pauline has truly made a difference in my life, and in my work,” she says. “Now, whenever I hear someone say, ‘I'm too old’, I share Pauline's story.”

A Walking Miracle

Restored sight allows Illinois woman to see her family



After watching her mother struggle with vision loss due to a brain tumor, going blind became something Sarah Mittler feared.

“I saw her not being able to look at us,” Sarah, a mother of five, recalls. “What mom wouldn’t want to see her children’s faces?”

As an adult, Sarah’s anxiety only grew as she began to experience her own vision problems. In January, 2009, she was diagnosed with Fuchs’ Dystrophy, a disorder that causes water to build up in the cornea, resulting in blurred vision, swelling and painful corneal blisters. While the disease often progresses slowly, Sarah’s did not; her sight diminished rapidly.

She soon found herself unable to read the flyers her children brought home from school, and relied on them to read her the emails she received from their teachers.

Even tasks like cooking became difficult. Without being able to check the label, she once reached for the wrong spice while cooking Sunday brunch for her family, and instead of serving cinnamon apples, she served chili powder apples. Her children began helping her read food labels and directions for medications.

Unfortunately, even with their help, certain activities, such as driving, became nearly impossible.

“I couldn’t see at the first dusting of snow,” Sarah explains. “I’d just aim for the middle of the street. I needed my kids to tell me where the curb was.”

One day in particular sticks out in Sarah’s mind. She was in the car with her daughter, and they were at a busy intersection that was undergoing construction.

“I couldn’t tell if the signal was working,” Sarah says. “I couldn’t distinguish color. It was worse than looking through wax paper.”

Sarah’s daughter had to tell her when the light was green, and they made it home safely, but Sarah knew that it was becoming too dangerous for her to drive. “I told my husband I couldn’t drive again,” she remembers.

While Sarah could handle the thought of giving up driving, what she couldn’t come to terms with was how she would miss out on her children’s lives. She wanted to see them grow up. She wanted to see them get ready for school dances and graduations. She wanted to see her son play baseball.

“Everyone always wants to think the doctor did everything...but there’s three parts of the process: the family, the recovery and the doctor.”



Sarah Mittler (far right), with her husband and daughter.

“I didn’t want to be the crazy mom, cheering for the wrong kid,” she says.

So, she decided to talk to her ophthalmologist about her options. Her doctor recommended a cornea specialist, who suggested a cornea transplant. She underwent the procedure on August 10, 2009.

After the surgery, as she peeked through her eye patch, Sarah could see the faces of her husband and children. “I kept thinking, ‘I have one good eye!’ I didn’t care what the vision was — I just kept thinking it was clear,” she recalls.

Her surgery was so successful that she soon decided to have a cornea transplant in her other eye, too. That surgery was also a success.

“I could see everything!” she exclaims.

With her restored vision came a new appreciation for everything she could now see — blades of grass, the mortar between the bricks of her neighbors’ home, even dust on a table in her house. “I was looking at dust and loving it,” she says.

But as Sarah was rediscovering her world, the people who made her sight possible were never far from her mind. She corresponded through letters with the family of her first cornea donor — a teenage boy, one of five siblings, similar to Sarah’s own family.

The grief that his family must have felt as they decided to donate his corneas resonated with Sarah, who lost a niece shortly before her transplant. “I saw a mother grieving,” she says. “I will always be eternally grateful to them.”

She also wrote a letter to the family of her second cornea donor, but doesn’t know if they’ve read it. If not, she says, that’s OK — the important part is that it’s there waiting for them, should they ever decide they want it.

Her donors have also proven inspirational to Sarah’s family.

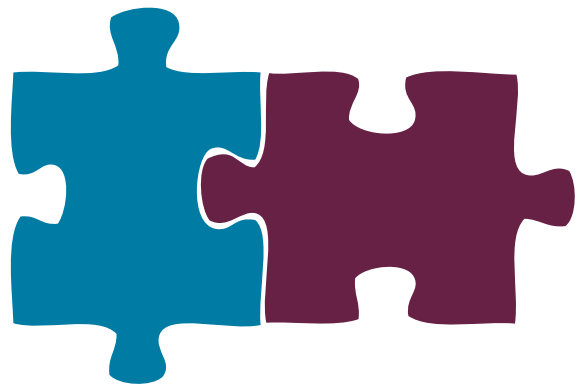
“My kids have told me that they want to be donors,” she says. And, what’s more, her 17-year-old daughter is interested in pursuing a career in ophthalmology or orthoptics to help others as her mother has been helped.

Sarah’s appreciation for her second chance for sight extends to the Illinois Eye-Bank, too. On the one-year anniversary of her first transplant, she brought a cake to the Eye-Bank for the staff to enjoy. While there, she met the Eye-Bank technician who recovered the cornea that would become hers. Sarah considers her an instrumental part of the process.

“Everyone always wants to think the doctor did everything,” she explains. “But there’s three parts of the process: the family, the recovery and the doctor.”

These days, Sarah’s vision is between 20/25 and 20/30, without glasses.

“I’m like a walking miracle,” she says.



A Good Neighbor

Community Partners program gets the word out about the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey

It's never easy being the new kid in town, so when the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey relocated to Clark last year, staff immediately set out to get to know the neighbors.

"We joined the Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce, along with the local Clark Chamber of Commerce, and started attending key meetings with economic development groups," says Margaret Chaplin, the Eye Bank's Executive Director.

These efforts were part of the Eye Bank's new Community Partners program, designed to help introduce the Eye Bank and its mission of sight restoration to local businesses which, in turn, receive valuable recognition for their support of a worthy cause.

"By hosting a Clark Chamber meeting, we've given other members a chance to see firsthand what we do," explains Chaplin. "They can then take that knowledge back to their businesses and organizations. Just as importantly, we are able to network with key local resources, opening doors to build strong business relationships."

Sharon Reddin, Vice President of Columbia Bank in Clark and President of the Clark Chamber, was so inspired by the work she observed at the Eye Bank that she suggested the Eye Bank apply for a grant through her bank, and offered to help walk the application through the process.

"Once people understand our mission, their willingness to help is inspiring," says Chaplin.

One such person is Michael C. Tyrone, Sr., Investors Savings Bank Vice President and Clark Branch Manager. After attending the Eye Bank's 2010 Open House – an event designed to foster community connections – Tyrone was motivated to recommend that Investors Savings support the Eye Bank's 2010 Visionary Award Banquet, and also become the Eye Bank's first official Community Partner. In addition, Tyrone has accepted an appointment to the Eye Bank's Board of Directors, and will assume that role in June.



Michael C. Tyrone, Sr.

"Michael's background and enthusiasm make him an ideal candidate for a Board position," says Chaplin. "We're thrilled to continue working with him."

If you would like to join the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey's Community Partners program, contact Margaret Chaplin at (800) 653-9379 or mchaplin@lionseyebanknj.org.

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