Illinois Donor Continues to Help Others
Star Athletes Return to the Playing Field Thanks to Their Eye Donors

Superior Support for Donor Families and Hospitals

Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary
From Our Executive Director

Believe it or not, it’s been 50 years since the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation and Heartland Lions Eye Banks opened our doors to save the sight of thousands worldwide.

Since joining the Foundation in 1977, I’ve been amazed by what our staff has been able to achieve over the past few decades. At the beginning, the Eye Bank was providing tissue for a handful of transplants each year; today, we’re providing tissue for seven transplants per day and up to 2,800 per year. We’ve also expanded beyond our headquarters in Columbia, Mo. to open eight branches across the Midwest, including our latest office in Wichita, Kan.

In addition to our Eye Bank, each of our five other programs - Eyeglass Recycling, Eye Care Assistance, Amblyopia (Lazy Eye) Prevention Screening, Glaucoma Detection Screening and Support of Ocular Research – has undergone exciting changes since the 1980’s and 1990’s, helping us lead individuals out of darkness not only in the U.S., but around the globe.

The Foundation couldn’t have achieved all we have without your help. Whether you’re a Missouri Lion, a medical professional, a financial contributor or a donor family, you have gotten us to where we are today and will take us where we need to go in the future. It is my great honor to thank you on behalf of the Foundation staff and those we help for an amazing 50 years of service.

To learn more about the Foundation’s 50th anniversary, I invite you to contact us at 800-283-1982, ext. 107 or email us at info@mlerf.org.

Again, thank you for being part of the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation and Heartland Lions Eye Banks.
**Cover Story**

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**Champions of Donation**

**St. John’s Hospital**

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**Superior Support for Donor Families and Hospitals**

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**Illinois Donor Continues to Help Others**

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**Spotlight on the Lions – Concord Village Lions Club’s Fish For Sight**

For decades, the Concord Village Lions, like other Lions clubs, has performed fundraisers throughout the community. In 1992, it undertook its greatest endeavor – the Fish For Sight Buddy Bass Tournament at Truman Lake.
New Eye Bank Branch Serves the Wichita Community

This March, Heartland Lions Eye Banks welcomed a new branch office in Wichita, Kan. – our eighth location in our service region and our fourth serving Kansas.

“HLEB opened a branch in Wichita to better serve the hospitals and bring our community eye banking approach to the area,” remarked Tony Bavuso, chief operating officer. “We believe that donated eye tissue from this community should come back to this community for transplant as a first priority. We want to ensure that is happening by having a local office to better facilitate the recovery of donor tissue and the transplantation of that tissue back into the community.”

The new location, located at 9415 E. Harry St., Ste. 106 in Wichita, is supervised by Frank Mull, branch manager and hospital services coordinator. Mull possesses more than 30 years of managerial and technical experience through his work at Cessna Aircraft and has extensive experience in the realm of quality improvement and business strategy development.

The new branch is one more way HLEB is working closely with Lions Clubs throughout Kansas. Said Bavuso, “As the only Lions eye bank in the state of Kansas, we are excited to serve this community in a way that really reflects our ties to the Lions Club International organization and their long-standing commitment to sight restoration.”

Champions of Donation - St. John’s Hospital

To connect cornea recipients and their surgeons to the highest-quality donor tissue possible, the Eye Bank relies on the staff at our partner hospitals to help facilitate the donation process.

Leading our hospitals in the number of requests for 2009 was St. John’s Hospital in Springfield, Mo. whose chaplains serve as the organization’s designated requestors. Kharim Strayhorn, hospital services coordinator for the Springfield branch of the Eye Bank, remarked, “What a wonderful, passionate and caring team St. John’s has. This group of chaplains is second to none when it comes to donation and taking care of families.”

St. John’s numbers for 2009 include:

- 413 families approached
- 150 consented cases
- 137 actual eye donors
- 154 corneas transplanted in the U.S. and around the world

The Eye Bank thanks St. John’s and our other partners in donation. Because of you, we were able to help 2,775 cornea recipients escape a lifetime of blindness in 2009.

Superior Support for Donor Families and Hospitals

Providing the highest level of service is the top priority of the Eye Bank’s Donor Services Center (DSC). To better meet the needs of potential donor families as well as our hospital partners, the DSC has undergone new staffing changes to increase service and efficiency throughout the donation process.

DSC coordinators are now assigned to one of two specialty areas. Family services coordinators offer comfort and support to potential donor families as well as information about the opportunity of eye donation – all from the privacy and security of our new private approach rooms. Screening and logistics coordinators work closely with hospital staff to determine medical suitability for donation and communicate with hospitals, funeral homes, coroners and organ procurement organizations to determine recovery logistics. All staff members are led by shift leaders who oversee and direct the DSC workflow as well as provide support to the coordinators.

Said Emily Tuttle, donor services manager, “Each role in the DSC is equally important to our mission. By focusing our staff’s skills in different areas of donation, we can provide the best service possible to everyone involved in the eye donation process.”

New Eye Bank Branch Serves the Wichita Community

This March, Heartland Lions Eye Banks welcomed a new branch office in Wichita, Kan. – our eighth location in our service region and our fourth serving Kansas.

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50 Years of Saving Sight!

In 2010, the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation and Heartland Lions Eye Banks will celebrate our 50th anniversary of serving the community and of our partnership with the Missouri Lions.

Since our founding in 1960, the Eye Bank has been a leader in eye banking, providing tissue for more than 33,000 transplants around the globe. We also provide researchers with whole globes and corneas that cannot be used for transplant, helping them develop cutting-edge treatments for a variety of eye diseases and conditions.

Today, with eight branches, the Eye Bank is one of the five largest eye banks in the U.S. and is expanding to meet the needs of those we serve in our Missouri, Illinois and Kansas region as well as those around the world.

Different Needs, Different Programs

In the 1980’s and 1990’s, the Foundation expanded our services beyond eye banking and our other recognizable program – Eyeglass Recycling – into Amblyopia (Lazy Eye) Prevention, Glaucoma Detection and Eye Care Assistance. Since 1980:

• More than 150,000 children have been screened for amblyopia
• More than 27,000 adults have been screened for glaucoma
• 164 Missourians received financial assistance for eye care

Because of the backing and volunteerism of the Missouri Lions and our other supporters, the Foundation continues to grow our programs, serving even more people each year.

Join Us in Celebrating

You can show your support of the Foundation and celebrate this important milestone in saving sight by getting your own Foundation 50th anniversary pin. Pins are just $10, and donations will fund the Foundation’s variety of programs. To purchase your pin, please call the Foundation development office at 800-283-1982, ext. 115, email us at info@mlerf.org, or send a check or money order to: 50th Anniversary Pin, Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation, 404 Portland Street, Columbia, MO 65201.

On behalf of the Foundation and everyone we serve, we are grateful to the Missouri Lions for an incredible 50 years and thank all of our supporters for your continued dedication to saving sight in your community.
Star Athletes Return to the Playing Field

“The need for a corneal transplant can occur at any age, for a number of reasons. For Kelsie of Kansas, it happened in the prime of her young life – just as she was entering her teen years.

Kelsie, an active volleyball and soccer player, began experiencing problems in her eye in November 2008. After visiting five doctors, she was finally diagnosed with a parasitic amoeba, contracted from contaminated water, such as from a pond or a hot tub. To treat the condition, Kelsie had to take eye drops every hour of the day, but even that didn’t cure the problem.

Said Kelsie, “My condition kept getting worse. It turned into a white blister on my eye, and I could barely see through it. It made playing sports a nightmare.”

Kelsie underwent a sight-saving corneal transplant in 2009 to rescue her diminishing vision. Although her recovery is still ongoing, Kelsie was able to get up and about within three days of surgery. Today, as a freshman in high school, Kelsie is back on the playing field – but this time she returns with clear vision. “Now my eyesight is almost normal with a contact on, and playing sports is fun like it used to be. I don’t get looked at weird when people are talking to me, and I don’t have pain anymore. Because of my donor, I can finally live my life how I want, without anything bothering me.”

Kelsie and her family are grateful to her donor family for their generosity in a time of despair. To thank them for their donation, Kelsie, like many Heartland Lions Eye Banks cornea recipients, wrote a heartfelt letter to the family.

Kelsie’s mother, Jodie, was especially touched by her daughter’s letter, “Honestly, the worst day of the entire ordeal was the day the nurse was explaining where the donor cornea would come from. It led to some revealing answers for Kelsie – that her donor needed to be near her age. It was very difficult for her to hear that, really for all of us, and I think that’s the day she decided that she wanted to show her appreciation for the generosity of this family that didn’t know her, didn’t know us, but was truly giving her back her life as she knew it.”

Together, Jodie and Kelsie encourage Kansas residents to join the state’s donor registry. “Registering as a donor is the single most selfless thing a person can do,” remarked Jodie. “You can’t imagine the changes and opportunities you can make for someone else in need. I have always been a donor, but it takes on a whole new meaning when someone you love is a recipient.”

If you’re an athlete and an organ transplant recipient or donor family member, you can take part in the National Kidney Foundation U.S. Transplant Games.
Like Kelsie, Jana experienced vision loss at a young age. In 2008, this active high school soccer and volleyball player from Missouri was diagnosed with a corneal ulcer that became infected with the bacteria pseudomonas. Although the infection cleared, it created a scar over her cornea, stealing both her vision and her freedom.

Because the condition affected Jana’s depth perception, she was forced to give up driving and faced difficulties handling every day activities like pouring a glass of milk or maneuvering her crowded high school hallways. Worst of all, Jana battled unbelievable challenges when she returned to the volleyball court.

“I played my senior year of high school, but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t hard,” said Jana. “Since one of my eyes had been impaired, I had lost the ability to have a sense of depth perception and speed. It came as a shock when my dad threw me a ball, and I couldn’t catch it. I had to relearn everything, all of the basics. I had to learn a whole new game of volleyball. Once a starter on the team, I was now a person who had to relearn how to pass a volleyball.”

Finally, in November 2008, Jana underwent a corneal transplant. While the surgery was a success, her recovery was a roller coaster. “My vision varied from day to day, sometimes very drastically. One day I could see better with my ‘good’ eye, then the next I would be running into things because I didn’t see them. At times it got really frustrating – it was like a coin toss to see how well I would see the following day.”

To protect her vision, Jana was under strict restrictions when it came to lifting and protecting her eyes. She had to insert eye drops four times a day, and her eye became very light sensitive, forcing her to wear dark sunglasses anytime she went outside.

As the year passed, Jana was given more privileges in her recovery and began to see her eyesight slowly return. Now she is back to driving and playing both volleyball and soccer. She is also finishing her freshman year in college, studying marine biology.

Without her donor and donor family, Jana could not be where she is today. “My cornea donor and family mean everything to me. If they didn’t decide to be an organ donor, there is a chance that I would never be able to see out of my eye again. They flipped my life 180 degrees!”

Because of their gift and the difference it made on her life, Jana is a public supporter of eye, organ and tissue donation. “I make a conscious effort at telling people my story and encouraging them to become organ donors. A lot of people are misinformed about organ donation, and I help them get the right information. Also people think of major organs that need to be donated and don’t realize all the smaller items that can enhance somebody’s life tenfold, like a cornea.”

“MY CORNEA DONOR AND FAMILY MEAN EVERYTHING TO ME. IF THEY DIDN’T DECIDE TO BE AN ORGAN DONOR, THERE IS A CHANCE THAT I WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE OUT OF MY EYE AGAIN. THEY FLIPPED MY LIFE 180 DEGREES!”

-Jana

This year’s competition will be held in Madison, Wis. from July 30 – August 4, 2010. For details or to find a team in your state, visit http://www.kidney.org/news/tgames2010/index.cfm.
A father. A husband. A brother. A son. Cody is many things to many people. To the recipients of his corneas, his skin and his bones, he is a true hero.

In January 2009, when 30-year-old Cody of Divernon, Ill. lost his life in a car accident, his family was faced with the decision whether or not to donate his tissue to others. Because of Cody’s caring personality and his wish to become a donor, his family chose to change another’s life through the miracle of transplantation.

Said his mother, Bonnie, “Cody had expressed interest in becoming an organ and tissue donor to all of us, even though we didn’t discuss it too much. We knew that’s what he wanted.” His sister, Tara, agreed, “He was kind of gruff, but would do anything for anyone and had a huge heart.”

Throughout his life, Cody was dedicated to taking care of those around him. When he wasn’t spending time with his family and friends, Cody was helping others in his community. Cody volunteered as a fire fighter for the Pawnee Fire Protection District in his twenties and spent time helping area farmers during the planting and harvesting seasons.

Cody was obsessed with NASCAR. The passing of his idol, Dale Earnhardt, hit Cody especially hard.

“I remember when Earnhardt passed, I never knew someone could be that upset about a person they didn’t know personally,” remarked Cody’s wife, Scarlett. “Cody was pretty passionate about the things he cared about.” In addition, Cody, an avid sports fan, followed Notre Dame, the Oakland Raiders and the St. Louis Cardinals, as well as loved gambling and playing poker with his friends.

At the time of his passing, Cody worked at Rettberg’s Inc. in Divernon, installing furnaces and air conditioners. “They all loved him there,” said Bonnie. “After he died, the company sent a letter to over 1,000 of their customers, letting them know about Cody since he had worked in their homes. The response was amazing. Many customers wrote back saying they remembered Cody and contributed donations to his son Kasen’s college fund.”

It’s no wonder Cody continues to change lives after he lost his own. According to Bonnie, Cody helped save the eye of one of his recipients. “In her case, she didn’t get her sight back, but because of a hole in her cornea, she would have lost her entire eye. Cody’s cornea healed her eye. It’s like Cody is still alive, and a part of him is with her. I just can’t wait to meet her someday.”

To learn how you can be a hero’s in someone’s life by pledging to become an eye, organ and tissue donor, visit www.hleb.org or www.donatelife.net.
CIRCLE OF SIGHT

Thanks to our generous donors:
November 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010

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Build a Legacy of Saving Sight

When you include the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation and Heartland Lions Eye Banks in your planned giving, you not only may save your heirs from estate taxes, you will help save the sight of thousands for years to come.

Planned gifts can be made to the Foundation in several ways, including gift annuities, gifts of life insurance, charitable remainder trusts, or most simply, bequests in wills. Each gift has its own tax advantages and implications, but all will help the Foundation continue to serve those in need in the U.S. and around the world.

In addition, any individuals that donate an accumulative $10,000 or more become honorary members of the Byron Keene Society. The Society was created in honor of Byron Keene who was an exemplary member of the Columbia Host Lions Club and demonstrated his commitment to service by investing his personal assets in Lion projects.

To learn more about the Foundation’s planned giving program, please contact us at 800-283-1982, ext. 107 or at info@mlerf.org.
Spotlight on the Lions – Concord Village Lions Club’s Fish For Sight

As the state project of the Missouri Lions, the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation depends on the support of clubs throughout the state. One of our biggest supporters is the Concord Village Lions Club, chartered in 1950 and based in St. Louis County.

For decades, the Concord Lions, like other Lions clubs, has performed fundraisers throughout the community. In 1992, it undertook its greatest endeavor – the Fish For Sight Buddy Bass Tournament at Truman Lake.

In its first year, the Tournament drew 180 boats. Today, the tournament averages 225 per year and requires 30 Lions members to run the tournament, set up the equipment and marshal the event. The Concord Village Lions hold a fish fry on Friday night before the event and a dinner and auction on Saturday night after the tournament.

Since the tournament began, it has raised a total of $704,651.96 for sight-saving programs in Missouri and around the world, including the Foundation. The money they raise helps us continue our six sight-saving programs.

We thank the Concord Village Lions for their continued support of our programs! For more information on the Fish For Sight tournament, visit www.fishforsight.org.