

Fall/Winter, 2011

VISION



GAME-CHANGER

Facing blindness, a Morton, Illinois educator and coach receives a much-needed assist.

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Meet Jessica Rathert

Community Engagement Coordinator

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DAN REYNOLDS
Director of Communications
dan@illinoiseyebank.org

STEPHANIE SORENSON
Communications Coordinator
ssorensen@illinoiseyebank.org

AMELIA SKIMIN
Staff Journalist
askimin@illinoiseyebank.org

CHRISTOPHER DEMPSEY
Constituent Data Coordinator
cdempsey@illinoiseyebank.org

ILLINOIS EYE-BANK
A Subsidiary of Midwest Eye-Banks
547 West Jackson Blvd., Suite 600
Chicago, IL 60661
Toll-Free: (800) 548-4703
www.illinoiseyebank.org

ILLINOIS EYE-BANK, WATSON GAILEY
301 S. Prospect Road, Suite 2
Bloomington, Illinois 61704
Toll-Free: (800) 548-4703
www.illinoiseyebank.org

The Illinois Eye-Bank is a 501(c)(3), independent, not-for-profit organization. We preserve and restore sight through transplantation, research, education and partnership.

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The Illinois Eye-Bank welcomed Jessica Rathert to its ranks on May 31, when she took over the role of Community Engagement Coordinator. This position was formerly occupied by Mary Schlereth, who now serves as the Eye-Bank's Professional Education Coordinator.

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Jessica is a graduate of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where she earned a degree in Radio and Television Broadcasting with an emphasis in Media Marketing Management. Before coming to the Eye-Bank, she was the Community Relations Coordinator for Mid-America Transplant Services, which covers southern Illinois, eastern Missouri and northeastern Arkansas.

"I love working in the transplant community," she says. "It allows me the amazing opportunity to see firsthand the difference donation makes in the lives of donor families and recipients."

As Community Engagement Coordinator, Jessica hopes to continue to grow the Eye-Bank's Ambassador Program, and to help strengthen its social media presence through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube activity.

"Both goals come back to the same thing, really," she explains. "It's the continued need to increase awareness about the importance of signing up on the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, and to dispel common myths and misconceptions about donation."

When she's not working, Jessica plays kickball and enjoys singing karaoke, going to concerts and reading. "Right now, I'm reading *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, the second book in Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy," she says.



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A word from our Executive Director

Diane Hollingsworth



As I celebrate my first full year as Executive Director of the Illinois Eye-Bank, I can't help but reflect on the changes I've already seen during this brief tenure -- most notably, our shift from being a division to a subsidiary of Midwest Eye-Banks, with our own local Board of Directors to help us better engage with you, the community we serve. Though we've existed since 1947, in many ways, our reorganization has been like a rebirth, so it only makes sense that we've had a year of firsts -- including this issue of *Vision*, the first devoted solely to the Illinois Eye-Bank.

Inside, you'll learn about other firsts, like our Summer Sight Soirée, and our inaugural walk in remembrance of our cornea donors, and in celebration of those who received the gift of sight. Please enjoy, and let me know what you think.

Thank you.

Diane Hollingsworth
Executive Director
dhollingsworth@illinoiseyebank.org
(800) 548-4703, ext. 765

Spiritual healing

Northwest Community Healthcare's Spiritual Care team offers support in difficult times

In times of crisis, patients and families need support -- regardless of their religious beliefs. And, although most major religions support eye, organ and tissue donation as a final act of charity, many families are distressed when faced with the decision to donate during a time of great personal loss.

That's where the Spiritual Care team at Northwest Community Healthcare (NCH) -- a dedicated team of hospital chaplains -- can step in to offer comfort and counsel to individuals of all faiths. The chaplains are a diverse, educated group, hailing from all over the world, including Egypt, India and Laos. All have Master's degrees and have completed an additional four semesters of training in Clinical Pastoral Education. They represent various religions, and can provide scriptures from even more, but their role goes beyond religious counsel -- the most important thing they can offer is comfort.

NCH places the responsibility for completing decedent paperwork with its Spiritual Care Department, meaning the chaplains are always in contact with the families of patients who have passed away. This ensures the chaplains will have an opportunity to check in with the families, helping to manage their grief during a difficult time.

"It's a unique thing that we provide," says Meg McClaskey, NCH's Chaplain and Manager for Spiritual Care. "We're there to help support whatever process the family may need."

Sometimes, that process includes helping to work out the details, like contacting the funeral home; other times, it's talking about the big questions -- "Why did this happen?" "What do we do now?"

The question of eye, organ and tissue donation is one that comes up often. While rules prevent chaplains from broaching the subject with families, they are responsible for notifying Gift of Hope and the Illinois Eye-Bank when a death occurs, as required of hospitals by law. After the family has spoken to a representative from Gift of Hope or the Eye-Bank, the chaplains are able to discuss what donation means and answer any questions.

"They're helping to guide families to what they can live with personally," explains McClaskey. "Sometimes, families have no idea what a great gift this can be. My staff has seen and met many people where having donated has, at some level, helped the family find meaning (in their loss)."

Their efforts do not go unappreciated. McClaskey says her staff gets notes from families, sometimes months later, thanking them for their care. It's touching, she says, but it's also a sign that they're providing a necessary service. "For my staff, it's their job to be deeply involved with people."



*Meg McClaskey, Ethics Consultant,
Manager of Spiritual Care Services*

A new game plan

Restored sight is a game-changer for Morton educator and coach

There's a longstanding tradition in baseball that allows a guest of honor to throw out the ceremonial first ball, signaling the start of a game. It's a privilege that has gone to presidents and other world leaders, celebrities and even retired ball players – but at the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey's "Night for Sight at the Ballpark" on July 23, it was double-cornea recipient Matt Gordon who got to do the honors.

Matt was in college when he first realized there was something seriously wrong with his vision. A basketball and baseball player, he noticed he was having trouble seeing during games.

An eye doctor diagnosed the problem as *keratoconus*, a degenerative eye condition, and told him that he would likely need a cornea transplant in the future.

"He said it could be six months or it could be ten years," Matt recalls.

Until then, the doctor prescribed hard contact lenses, commonly used to treat keratoconus. The lenses helped Matt's vision, but were also too uncomfortable to wear for extended periods of time. Two years later, in 1997, Matt was only able to tolerate them for four or five hours a day, meaning he could only see for that amount of time. His doctor decided the time had come for a transplant.

He received a donated cornea in his right eye – which had been the weaker of the two. Matt noticed a difference in his vision almost immediately.

"Even my left eye felt better after the transplant," he says.

For years, he was able to see for 12 to 16 hours a day, thanks to the transplant and contact lenses. He got married and started a career as a teacher and coach. Life went on. He became a school principal, and he and his wife expanded their family to include three children.

Then, a familiar adversary reared its head once again: The vision in Matt's left eye began to deteriorate.

This led to a second successful cornea transplant during the spring of 2011. Once nearly blind, Matt's vision is now 20/25 in his right eye and 20/30 in his left.

"My day-to-day living is much easier," he reports. "I can see a whole lot better, and with that, I feel a lot better."

But his donors and their families are never far from his heart. "The hardest part is knowing that two families suffered," he says. "It's hard to comprehend. It's something that's with me every day... I never forget that it's a gift."

With that in mind, Matt makes the most of every day, saying, "I try to look at life with the perspective that the glass is half-full."

*"It's something that's with me every day...
I never forget that it's a gift."*

Field of vision

CornBelters and the Eye-Bank team up for a Night for Sight at the Ballpark

Nearly 200 supporters of the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey turned out for the Eye-Bank's Night for Sight at the Ballpark on July 23, when the Normal CornBelters took on the Evansville Otters at the Corn Crib in Normal, Illinois.

This was the second year in a row the Eye-Bank has held this event.

"It's always a really good time," says Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey Regional Coordinator Dave Hearn, who organized the event. "We hope to do it again next year, too."

Guests got to stay for the game and enjoy an all-you-can-eat barbeque beforehand. A portion of each ticket sold went directly to the Eye-Bank, supporting its mission of sight restoration.



Cornea transplant recipient Matt Gordon threw out the first pitch.

The event raised about \$1,000 for the Eye-Bank and, thanks to promotional efforts, also raised awareness about the Eye-Bank's mission. "I did an interview with WJBC AM 1230," Hearn reports, "and we were listed on Web sites of local media community calendars."



Cornea transplant recipient Linda Ellerman (center), with husband Doug (left), enjoys game day with IEB Professional Development Manager Kara Kelly (right).

Special thanks go to cornea recipients Matt Gordon, who threw out the first pitch, and Linda Ellerman, who staffed a table with information about eye, organ and tissue donation for the 3,000 people who were at the Corn Crib that evening. The Eye-Bank also thanks Gailey Eye Clinic and Eye Surgical Associates for their support.

The Prospect Project

Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey relocates to larger, better-equipped Prospect Road facility

A growing staff – combined with a growing need to serve populations across central Illinois – has motivated the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey to pull up stakes and outfit a larger space for its operations in Bloomington.

The facility relocated to 301 S. Prospect Road, Suite 2 in Bloomington, effective July 1 of this year.

"We had two major objectives," says Bob Albrecht, Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey Division Manager.



"We needed to enhance our space for a growing staff and lab requirements, and we needed space where we could engage with the communities we serve."

At 2,300 square feet (up from the previous 650 square feet), the new facility fits the bill. Not only does it offer ample workspace and an advanced laboratory setting, it has capacity to host community and professional gatherings. The new facility will host an open house in March, 2012. The Eye-Bank is also planning a 60th anniversary celebration in June.

Look for details soon at www.illinoiseyebank.org



To schedule a tour of the new facility, contact Dave Hearn at (312) 706-6772 or dhearn@illinoiseyebank.org.



Illinois Eye-Bank debuts “I Can Make a Difference” Walk

The Illinois Eye-Bank’s inaugural “I Can Make a Difference” 5K Walk may have been the first event of its kind for the Eye-Bank, but based on its success, it probably won’t be the last.

“We were thrilled with the turnout,” reports Jessica Rathert, the Eye-Bank’s Community Engagement Coordinator. “There were about 160 people in attendance, including 18 wonderful volunteers.”

Donor family members, cornea recipients and friends of the Eye-Bank were represented at the September 17th Walk, which was held at the Danada Forest Preserve in Wheaton. Walkers set off on the 3.1 mile loop at 5 p.m., led by the Eye-Bank’s mascot, Seymour. After their return, a remembrance ceremony began, featuring luminaries designed by the participants and a Donate Life flag. Eye-Bank Ambassador and cornea recipient Pamela LeFaire was joined by her friends to sing the songs “Hero” and “Because You Loved Me.”

The purpose of the event was to honor the donors who gave the gift of sight, while celebrating the recipients whose sight had been restored.

“It was exactly what we wanted it to be,” says Rathert. “Thank you to all our participants, volunteers, contributors and sponsors for supporting the Walk. We hope to see all of you again next year.”

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Summer Sight Soirée heats up Chicago’s social scene

After 12 successful years, the Illinois Eye-Bank retired its annual Gift of Sight Gala and, on June 9, introduced a new event: the Summer Sight Soirée.

“The Gala was always a wonderful event, but this year we wanted to try something different,” explains Diane Hollingsworth, the Eye-Bank’s Executive Director. “Our event committee, chaired by Dr. David Donnersberger, did a great job putting this together.”

Held at the Peninsula Hotel, the evening featured cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, served against the backdrop of Chicago’s urban canopy. CBS2’s Ryan Baker acted as Master of Ceremonies, which included recognition of Jean Antoniou as

2011’s Woman of Vision and Randy Epstein, M.D. as the Gift of Sight Honoree.



2011 Woman of Vision Jean Antoniou with Gift of Sight Honoree Dr. Randy Epstein.

Music for the event was performed by lush electronic string trio Deep Blue Field. Special guest Secretary of State Jesse White hand delivered Dr. Epstein’s custom license plate order, “EYES”.

The event raised more than \$80,000, thanks to the generosity of our many sponsors and supporters.



Your sight-restoring legacy

When you include a provision in your will or trust for the benefit of the Illinois Eye-Bank, you provide essential resources that will help shape the future of the Eye-Bank for generations to come.

Arranging a bequest is simple, and reduces your taxable estate while allowing you to retain your assets throughout your lifetime. The flexibility of a bequest allows you to set it up as you see fit, whether you want to leave a set dollar amount, a percentage of your estate or specific assets, such as securities, real estate or personal property.

Four Steps to Making a Bequest

1

Determine your intention. You can choose how you would like your future gift to support the Eye-Bank. Contributors can provide unrestricted gifts, to be used at the discretion of the Eye-Bank, add to an already established fund or create their own permanently-endowed fund.

2

State your intention. When you have decided how you wish to support the Eye-Bank, document your intentions in a will or trust. Executive Director Diane Hollingsworth can help provide specialized language, and your own legal counsel can offer estate planning guidance and preparation of the necessary documents.

3

Declare your intention. Once you have legally documented your bequest, the Eye-Bank will ask you to complete and return an intention form. This Statement of Bequest Intention is not a legally binding document; it simply allows the Eye-Bank to be aware of your intentions and appropriately recognize your efforts during your lifetime.

4

Recognition of your bequest. Once the Eye-Bank has received your Statement of Bequest Intention and documentation showing your gift has been listed in your will or trust, you will receive acknowledgment of your generosity. As an Eye-Bank supporter, you will be invited to special events; you'll also receive key publications and updates on our Eye and Vision Research Program. The Illinois Eye-Bank honors all requests for anonymity.

Types of Bequests

There are several different kinds of bequests:

- **Specific bequests** are used to make the gift of a specific dollar amount or specific assets, such as securities, real estate or personal property.
- **Residuary bequests** are used to give all or a portion of the remainder of your estate after payment of expenses and any specific amounts designated to other beneficiaries.
- **Contingent bequests** will result in a gift to the Illinois Eye-Bank only in the event of the death of other beneficiaries, or the fulfillment of certain conditions described in your estate plans.

Information on Giving

Tax considerations: The Illinois Eye-Bank is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Its Federal Tax ID number is 27-3107617. Your gift to the Illinois Eye-Bank is tax-deductible as provided by law.

If you are considering designating the Eye-Bank in your estate or have already arranged a bequest, please contact Executive Director Diane Hollingsworth at (312) 706-6765 or dhollingsworth@illinoiseyebank.org to discuss your intentions and ensure your wishes are carried out. The Eye-Bank is happy to work with you on a confidential basis, without cost or obligation. However, we cannot give financial advice; please consult a qualified financial advisor or estate planner before making any decisions concerning your assets.

VISION

A Publication of the Illinois Eye-Bank

2011 AVIATORS NIGHT FOR SIGHT



Event Co-Chairs Franco La Marca & Morgan Stogsdill



Ambassadors for Vision Council



IEB Executive Director Diane Hollingsworth & Jarrett Rayon



Fashion show sponsored by Akira



Ambassador for Vision Anthony Diaz & father Jaime



HGTV design star Kevin Grace & Stevanie Howard



Lyle Genin, John & Sandra D'Arco, Lara & Ronald Ventura



Linda & Dr. Randy Epstein with daughter Sarah

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The Illinois Eye-Bank's Ambassadors for Vision Council (A4V) hosted its second Aviators Night for Sight on October 15 at the Schaumburg Regional Airport. As Chicago's premier hangar event, Aviators merged high fashion and elegance while offering 225 guests a taste of luxury, with jets, sports cars, entertainment, fashion and exceptional cuisine.

"It was a beautiful night in support of the restoration of sight," says Illinois Eye-Bank Executive Director Diane Hollingsworth.