Cornea Transplant Patient Can See Bright Future

4-year-old Mina, who was diagnosed with Peters’ Anomaly as a baby, thrives after undergoing corneal transplant procedures. Read more on page 4.
Update on Corneal Transplantation

Sadeer B. Hannush, M.D., Medical Director, Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley

The field of corneal transplantation has evolved tremendously over the past decade. Until the mid-2000s, there was essentially only one type of corneal transplant offered to patients with corneal clouding affecting their vision. A full thickness corneal transplant was the procedure of choice, irrespective of which layer of the cornea was affected by the disease or condition. The normal cornea is 0.5/100th of an inch thick, and it can swell to almost 1/25th of an inch in certain conditions, with significant loss of vision. Although the reason for this swelling only affects the back 2% of the cornea (where the pump cells of the cornea are responsible for pumping fluid back into the eye to keep the cornea clear), cornea surgeons for decades replaced the entire cornea with relatively good results.

Over the past decade, cornea surgeons have refined the techniques of corneal transplantation to what is now known as layer-specific keratoplasty or partial thickness corneal transplantation. With these techniques, surgeons are able to split the already very thin human cornea to its component layers and replace only the layer affected by the disease entity. The most common cause for corneal transplantation is endothelial dysfunction, where the pump cells on the back of the cornea no longer work well to keep the cornea clear. We are now able to strip those off and replace them with tens of thousands of pump cells from a healthy donor cornea. The transplanted tissue is approximately 1/150th of an inch thick. The Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley has been at the forefront of this newer procedure called Descemet’s Stripping Automated Endothelial Keratoplasty or DSAEK, providing partial thickness donor corneas to surgeons who perform this procedure. Fewer sutures are used! The results have been transformative with patients experiencing quicker visual rehabilitation than in the past.

In 2013 the Lions Eye Bank embarked on an ambitious project to adopt the newest form of partial thickness corneal transplantation, Descemet Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty or DMEK. In this procedure the donor tissue used to replace the dysfunctional sump pump cells is 1/2,500th of an inch thick!! Our laboratory space has been enhanced, an operating microscope acquired and our own David Reichtschaften sent for special training to learn how to prepare the donor tissue for this procedure. In the very near future, LEBDV will be able to provide this very thin tissue to surgeons performing DMEK and patients who can benefit from it.

The Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley remains on the cutting edge (no pun intended!) of eye banking and the provision of the Gift of Sight to patients in the Delaware Valley and beyond.

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Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley
2013 a Success for Eye Bank

I cannot believe how fast 2013 went! My past year serving as the Chairman and CEO of the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley has been a high honor. I am so grateful for the help of my fellow trustees and the hard work of the staff to make this year a great one.

Before my term began, I wrote a few goals I wanted to accomplish during my tenure. I wanted to continue our strong efforts toward meeting our Endowment Fund goal. Since July, we have added 29 new PID Gene Polgar Fellows, and many existing Fellows have earned progressives by continuing to donate. The Endowment Fund is also greatly helped by the sale of Lions Clubs International international trading pin conventions. We’re also trying to grow our affinity program with TD Bank, which can give the Eye Bank additional funding.

Since starting my term, I have developed a more in-depth understanding of the daily operations of the Eye Bank. I have been honored to represent this organization at various fundraisers, dinners and events around the region. It has been a pleasure to meet grateful recipients and thank donor families.

2013 was so rewarding, and I would like to extend a special thank-you to those who helped and supported our mission throughout the year.
Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley has always believed that everyone deserves the best eyesight possible, regardless of his or her ability to pay the costs of surgery.

Eye Bank President Jim Quirk describes fulfilling regional gratis tissue requests as the “biggest challenge we face at the Eye Bank.” Cornea surgeons request tissue after meeting with patients and determining there’s a need for a transplant. In gratis cases for Delaware Valley residents, the patient is either under-insured or not insured, and a transplant would not be possible unless the doctor requests gratis tissue.

“Lions Eye Bank has always met the regional gratis tissue need,” said Jim. “But in the past two to three years, the number of requests has grown and has had an unpredictable budgetary impact. It was clear we needed additional funds to cover recent and future requests.”

Since May 2013, Delaware Valley gratis tissue requests for 20 regional residents were fulfilled. Funds donated from the 2013 Gift of Sight golf tournament, the Giving Tuesday and end-of-year campaigns were applied to those who truly need it most in the Delaware Valley. “The response from ‘neighboring-helping-neighbors’ covered 25% of costs for Delaware Valley residents,” according to Jim. “Ages of the recipients ranged up to 86 years young! Six surgeries were for children ages 3 months to 5 years. Thank you to all who graciously contributed.”

Also, eye banks have a long-standing commitment to international humanitarian care. In 2013, both Dr. Sadeer Hannush, Medical Director of the Eye Bank, and Dr. Christopher Rapuano, Director of the Cornea Service at Wills Eye Hospital, embarked upon mission trips to Tenwek Hospital in Bomet, Kenya. The purpose of their mission was to teach and perform corneal transplants. For a humanitarian mission, many eye banks across the United States will often join together to send corneas with the surgeon.

Jim explained, “Our mission is to restore sight to those in need. We do not want financial barriers or international borders to stand in the way of doing the right thing.”

Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley Medical Advisory Board

Meet Dr. Abel, Ophthalmologist

Meet Dr. Abel, a board-certified ophthalmologist on staff at Christiana Care Health System. He is a former Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at Thomas Jefferson University. He founded and was the Medical Director of the Medical Eye Bank of Delaware in 1981. When the Medical Eye Bank of Delaware merged with the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley, Dr. Abel continued his leadership as a member of the Medical Advisory Board.

Dr. Abel earned his medical degree at Jefferson Medical College in 1969, completed his ophthalmology residency at Mt. Sinai Hospital and was a Cornea Fellow at the University of Florida.

He teaches locally and internationally on numerous subjects, including cornea, cataract and nutrition. For 25 years, he instructed Cornea Microsurgery Workshops at the Academy of Ophthalmology meetings annually, along with a course on world blindness. He served on the Academy’s Committee of International Ophthalmology and, through that committee, introduced the concept of allowing foreign ophthalmologists to become members of the Academy.

Dr. Abel has always been committed to international humanitarian work and has travelled to Mexico, India, Nepal, Jordan, Tunisia, Gaza and Palestine, to name a few. When asked why he became involved in international work, he said: “the same reason I became a physician; I wanted to make a contribution to others.” He added, “You feel good doing services for other people. It’s rewarding to see positive, short-term results and the transfer of skill.”

Dr. Abel was the Keynote Speaker at our annual 22D Sight Night this past fall and gave a lecture titled “Giving and Receiving.” He discussed the Art of Giving and how the Lions Clubs’ generosity helps the Lions Eye Bank to positively impact the lives of recipients, their families, the community and allow patients to have surgery scheduled in a timely fashion.

“There are very few philanthropic organizations that support the needs of their clients and physicians on a daily basis. The Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley is always willing to say ‘yes’ whenever and wherever it can. It is a privilege to work with the members of this organization.”
After moving to the United States from Egypt, Hany began a career in computer engineering and settled down with his wife in East Brunswick, New Jersey. They had two daughters and then a few years later welcomed a son, Mina.

There is no family medical history of eye disorders, so it was a shock when Mina was born with a serious problem. The doctors suspected it was Peters’ Anomaly and referred the family to Dr. Alex Levin at Wills Eye Hospital. Dr. Levin confirmed the diagnosis was Peters’ Anomaly and recommended the family see Dr. Christopher Rapuano for Mina to go under a cornea transplant.

“Peters’ Anomaly is a congenital disease, meaning people are born with it and it often occurs in both eyes,” said Dr. Rapuano. “Peters’ Anomaly is identified by a thin and clouded cornea, and in severe cases like Mina’s, the cornea looks almost white and the baby is unable to see. In these cases, transplantation is needed in the first three to six months of life. Vision rapidly develops in the first year of life and continues until age 12, so it is important to correct problems as early as possible.”

Mina’s first cornea transplant occurred when he was four months old, followed by another one at six months old.

“It’s not easy to see your baby go under anesthesia,” Hany said. “No matter how many surgeries Mina has, seeing him hooked up to the tubes and wires make it feel like the first time all over again. It really changes your entire family. We had never experienced these kind of medical problems and to see them happening to our young son could be heartbreaking at times. But we had faith that it would get better. And it did.”

Though Mina faced many challenges so early on in his life, he is a resilient child and recovered very well. He has to wear contacts each day and use different eye drops and ointments, and because of the high risk of infection while swimming, Mina is unable to learn how to swim and must stay out of pools and the ocean. But today, Mina is walking, coloring and laughing like many other four-year-olds. He particularly loves playing with toy airplanes, cars and Legos. And even after a few delayed developments due to time spent in hospitals and doctors’ offices, he has been able to catch up to his peers and today can communicate with his family.

A man of deep faith, Hany believes that good things can come out of difficult situations. That has certainly been the case with Mina’s medical journey, he added. According to Hany, faith and prayer have guided and comforted his family through not only Mina’s corneal transplant procedures, but also a serious retinal detachment scare, the positive result of which the family has described as a miracle.

Hany’s extended family has been extremely helpful in taking Mina to appointments and watching the other children. Mina’s eye disorder changed the immediate family dynamic, but it ultimately brought them closer and gave them a better understanding of how a family can work together.

Another surprise was a bit of innovation on Hany’s part that even impressed the medical professionals. When a young child is sent home after eye surgery, he has to keep a plastic shield taped over his eye to reduce the risk of infection and make sure the child does not scratch it while it heals. Hany noticed that constantly removing and re-taping the shield to Mina’s face was causing some irritation. Ever the engineer, Hany decided to glue rubber along the edge that touched Mina’s face. This decreased the amount of tape sticking to Mina’s face and was more comfortable. When Dr. Rapuano saw the new and improved shield at Mina’s next visit, he thought it was genius and told Hany it should be on the market!

Perhaps the most unexpected and welcome outcome of Mina’s journey to transplantation and better vision was the kindness of people who were not family or close friends.

“We are grateful to Mina’s donors and their families,” Hany added. “When I watch my young son do simple things, like play with his toys, I am overcome with emotion, because there was a time when we worried he would not be able to do that. It’s thanks to someone who made the selfless decision to donate that he is able to do it. It’s amazing.”
‘It Truly Is a Miracle’:
Transplant Recipient’s Life Turns Around

Family has always been a priority in Carmen Perez’s life.

In 1964, she moved with her family to the United States from Cuba. With her family, she adjusted to a new language, country and job. While living in Baltimore in 1976, she started to experience eye problems and learned she had Fuchs’ dystrophy, a slowly progressing corneal disease.

Over the next few decades, Carmen’s vision began to deteriorate. She developed cataracts, and after surgery, her condition worsened. She could not see out of her left eye and was unable to drive. “I felt restless and trapped in my own house,” she said. “I knew it was time for my cornea transplant.”

In 2008, Dr. Christopher Rapuano performed a transplant in Carmen’s left eye. She said the difference was “immediate and incredible.” She had a transplant on her right eye in 2013 and was able to see clearly out of both eyes for the first time in many years. As a result of her good fortune, Carmen decided to designate herself as a donor on her driver’s license.

Carmen’s husband, Angel “Bob” Perez, was impressed by the ease of the cornea transplant experience and wanted to become more involved. He became a trustee of the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley in 2009 and currently serves as 3rd Vice Chairman.

Carmen is now able to spend time with her husband, three sons, three daughters-in-law and six grandchildren and not miss a moment. She is very involved in her church community, volunteering as a Eucharistic-minister and taking communion to the sick at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, New Jersey. She wakes up each morning grateful for the donors and their families who made her vision possible. “It is so wonderful and generous when people think to donate,” she said. “It’s a hard time for them, but they still put others first.”

To anyone who needs a cornea transplant, Carmen urges them not to be afraid about the surgery. “Nerves are normal,” she explained. “But it will completely turn your life around. I can now take care of my grandchildren and watch them grow up. It truly is a miracle.”

Unfortunately, Tiffany faced some significant health concerns, and in October 2012, during her senior year at Cheyney, Tiffany died of a pulmonary embolism. The family was heartbroken. While they were unable to donate Tiffany’s organs, the decision to donate her eyes, bone and tissue was a given.

“Since I’ve worked here so long, everyone at the Eye Bank watched Tiffany grow up. She was very familiar with the work we do, and she felt strongly about giving back. I knew we could donate her corneas and help to restore the vision of two individuals. After the surgery, the doctor who transplanted one of her corneas let me know that his patient was already seeing clearer than she had in years. It brought tears to my eyes and I thought to myself, what a beautiful legacy she’s passed on,” said Althea.

“Tiffany’s life wasn’t just a blessing to her family and the recipients who received her gift,” Althea explained. “She left a mark on many. When she passed on, the Cheyney community came together in ways we couldn’t imagine: holding candlelight vigils, busing students to her service and even presenting her an honorary BS degree in May 2013. I am so proud to say that Tiffany accomplished more in her short life than many ever will. And she continues to live through the people she has helped—her family, her friends, her peers and her corneal recipients.”

Tiffany’s Life Brings Blessings to Family, Community and Gift Recipients

By all accounts, Tiffany was an extraordinary young woman, known for her memorable spirit, motivating personality and strong faith. An active student, she graduated from West Philadelphia High School with a resume full of accomplishments, including being named homecoming queen and elected class secretary. She won awards at science fairs and served as an advocate for school reform. Entering Cheyney University in 2008, her mom, Althea, who has worked for the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley for more than 27 years, said, “Tiffany worked hard to excel, despite numerous hospital stays, and she had many accomplishments, such as being appointed secretary for the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality: Cheyney Branch in September 2012. But more important, Tiffany always encouraged and helped her friends and classmates stay on track. She was very giving and always left an impression on the people she met!”

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20th Annual Gift of Sight Charity Golf Classic

It’s that time of the year again. Tee up this summer to support the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley.

Save the Date:
Friday, August 8, 2014
Woodcrest Country Club
300 Evesham Road
Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08003

FIRST EVENT – TEE-OFF
11:00 a.m.  Registration & Lunch
12:30 p.m.  Tee Off
$149 per Golfer Registration Fee (includes cart, fees, dinner buffet and more)

Early Bird Special – Register before July 1, and pay only $139 per golfer!

SECOND EVENT – NOT A GOLFER?
Beginning at 4:30 p.m.
• Dinner buffet, $39.00 per person
• Awards
• Auctions

2013 Tournament Results
1: First-place winners (from left): Rick Morris, Matt Smith, Brett Smith and S. Gregory Smith, M.D.
2: Second-place winners (from left): Anthony Villari, Mark Zagunis, Phillip Villari Jr. and Phillip Villari Sr.
3: Third-place winners (from left): Matt DeCosta, Dan Kelly, Rob Brand and Dan Devine

Proceeds Benefit Those Unable to Afford a Cornea Transplant

2014 SPONSORSHIP LEVELS
To see what’s included in each sponsorship level package visit, www.lebdv.org or call the Eye Bank at 1-800-743-6667.

Visionary Sponsor – $3,000
Buffet Dinner – $1,500
Flag Sponsor – $1,000
Lunch – $1,000
Giveaway Bag – $750
Putting Contest – $500
Inside Back Cover Ad - $350
Club-Level Sponsor – $250
Hole Sponsor – $100
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Tipton Communications

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Lion Mark Green
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PDG Dave and Lion Barbara Smith

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Historic Seven Stars Inn
Jack’s Firehouse
Lion Bob Perry
Lion Jim Alexander
Lion Mark Green
Longwood Gardens
Lorraine Minnich
Melitta Coffee
PDG Dave and Lion Barbara Smith
Philadelphia Flyers
Philadelphia Phillies/Scott Sheridan
Rader Valley Country Club
Reading Country Club
Sandy Jones
Sesame Place
The YES! Network
Wills Eye Institute
Woodcrest Country Club
PDG Richard Zimmermann
Eye Bank Support at Work
Through the generosity of donor families and financial supporters, the Eye Bank recorded the following clinical outcomes ending December 31, 2013:

**CORNEAL TISSUE DONORS**  730
**CORNEAL/GLOBE TISSUE GIFTED**   1,459
**CORNEAL TISSUE GIFTED FOR TRANSPLANT SURGERY**     1,089
**CORNEAL TISSUE GIFTED FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH** 523

Since 1957, the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley has coordinated more than 35,000 cornea transplant surgeries at the request of donor families and their loved ones.

*Donor Profile: 2013
Ages 1 to 10 = .1%
Ages 11 to 20 = 2.9%
Ages 21 to 40 = 13%
Ages 41 to 60 = 54%
Ages 61 to 70 = 28%
Age 70+ = 2%

** Includes corneal tissue imports

By the Numbers
Here’s a look at the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley’s financials for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013.

**REVENUE**

- Investments 8%
- Contributions 5%
- Tissue Distribution 87%

**EXPENSE**

- Administrative 10%
- Fundraising 6%
- Program Services 84%

Fundraising News
In the past year, our fundraising efforts for The Endowment Fund of the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley have been very successful. We have added 29 new PID Gene Polgar Fellows and many progressives from Fellows who continue to give. The contributions of these inductees mark a significant milestone along the Eye Bank’s journey toward reaching its fundraising goal of $10 million.

Lions Clubs commemorative pins are enthusiastically traded internationally. Often, pin collections are kept in boxes and closets for many years. Please consider donating your pins to the Eye Bank. They will be traded and proceeds donated to The Endowment Fund.

You can also support the Eye Bank by making your donation today using the enclosed form, by contacting the Eye Bank at 800-743-6667 or by securely donating online at www.lebdv.org.

In May, Exelon/PECO held its seventh annual Energy in the Community Awards luncheon to honor employee volunteerism. The Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley received a $5,000 grant because of the hard work of Lion Mark Green of the Pottstown-Stowe Lions Club. Pictured at the event are PECO President/CEO Craig Adams (left), Trustee Lion Mark Green, Eye Bank President/COO Jim Quirk and PECO Vice President of Support Services Ellen Cavanaugh.

In November, the PID Gene Polgar Fellows gathered for the annual endowment brunch at the Yardley Inn in Yardley, PA. Endowment Co-Chairman PDG Jim Minnich (left), PID Gene Polgar, Eye Bank President Lion Jim Quirk and Endowment Co-Chairman PCC Mel Bray presented five fellows with progressives.

EBAA Accreditation Board Co-Chairs Barry Lee, M.D., of Georgia Eye Bank (left) and Jim Quirk, President and COO of Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley at the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) annual meeting in Chicago, IL, last June.

Delaware Governor Jack Markell stopped by the District 22-D Sight Night on October 29, 2013. He thanked the Lions Club members for their community service and fundraising for the Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley.

Did you know?
Thanks to a partnership between Facebook and Donate Life America, Facebook has updated its system to enable individuals to include their organ/tissue/eye donor status in their profile and, if not currently a registered donor, to follow a link and register.

In support of this initiative to increase the number of donors who save and heal lives, we encourage all registered donors to update their Facebook profile to show their donor status. We ask unregistered donors to use this feature to sign up today!

While you’re at it, be sure to “Like” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lebdv for the latest insights and events from LEBDV.
The Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley’s 2015 winter cruise will be aboard the Royal Caribbean’s new super ship, the “Quantum of the Seas”! Set sail with the Eye Bank on March 13-20, 2015. The ship departs from Cape Liberty, NJ.

**Ports of Call:**
- Cape Liberty, NJ
- Cape Canaveral, FL
- Nassau
- Coco Cay (private island)

Prices start from $1,816 (balcony), which includes a $200 tax-deductible donation to the Eye Bank, all taxes, port charges, meals, room service, entertainment and an amazing list of onboard activities!

For inside and ocean-view rates, please call Georgiann Jaworskyj at 856-663-0444 or email her at georgiann@customtravelservices.com.