

# FLORIDA LIONS EYE BANK Newsight



Miller School of Medicine • Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
P.O. Box 016880 Miami, FL 33101 • 800-320-7000 Ext. 6359

## YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND!

### Annual Installation Dinner June 17

The Florida Lions Eye Bank Annual Installation Dinner is set for Saturday, June 17 at the Forest Glen Country Club in Naples, Florida. All corneal and sclera transplant recipients are invited to join us for this wonderful event that will begin another year of **Giving the Gift of Sight**. The evening will begin with cocktails and a silent auction at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner and the installation of new officers.

Obtaining the valuable corneas and scleras needed to improve the sight and lives of recipients remains one of the major goals of the eye bank.

This evening is also important to the Lions Clubs of our region. Clubs from throughout South Florida provide financial support to the Florida Lions Eye Bank and spread the important message of becoming an eye donor so that much-needed tissue is available.

Please call 1-800-320-7000, extension 6359, for additional information.

### Bonita Springs Lions Support Sight Causes

The generosity of the Bonita Springs Lions Club is helping people to see. During the club's March meeting they announced a donation of \$52,000 for vision programs. More than 105 guests and members attended, including the Florida Lions Eye Bank Board of Directors and 35 members from out of state.

Eye Bank President Mike San Miguel accepted the \$27,000 portion of the donation for the Florida Lions Eye Bank from Bonita Springs Club President Gordon Hare.

Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza spoke about the various uses of donated eyes and reported that the Eye Bank's satellite office in Collier County collected eyes from 95 donors last year.

*FLEB President Mike San Miguel (L) and Bonita Springs Lions Club President Gordon Hare.*



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# Florida Lions Eye Bank Hosts Open House

Orlando Bemby was a most inspirational speaker at the Florida Lions Eye Bank Open House held at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Orlando, who had bilateral corneal transplants for the treatment of kerataconus, summed up his experience of receiving sight-saving corneas from the eye bank like this: "The words of an old song came to me, *I can see clearly now.*"

Mr. Bemby added that he is very grateful for the fact that since he received his corneal transplants he can now see well enough to keep his job as a Miami-Dade County corrections officer and serve as a pastor at his church. "Lots of times we all take things for granted like having perfect eyes and I never thought I would lose my sight. I thank God for the Lions Club, Eye Bank and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute ophthalmologist-surgeon Dr. Sonia Yoo for giv-

ing me the opportunity to see again," he said.

Florida Lions Eye Bank Medical Director Dr. Sander Dubovy gave background information on the eye bank since it was chartered in October 1961. Eye Bank Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza welcomed guests and invited them to experience a tour of the facilities before joining everyone for refreshments on the patio of the Retter Café.



(L-R) Eye Bank Medical Director Dr. Sander Dubovy, corneal transplant recipient and guest speaker Orlando Bemby, Eye Bank Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza and Eye Bank President Mike San Miguel.

## Messages from grateful tissue recipients

*The following is reprinted from a letter received at the Florida Lions Eye Bank from a recent cornea transplant recipient.*

### **Gentleman:**

**Early in 1992, at age 71, my vision suddenly had deteriorated. It was like trying to see through a thick white cloud. I visited four different ophthalmologists, resulting in four different prescriptions for glasses. During my last exam, the doctor said, "what is wrong with your eyes, new glasses cannot correct." The next ophthalmologist spoke of the possibility that it could be a cornea problem. From my first visit to Dr. Alan M. Silbert I felt comfortable and safe in his hands. He performed a cornea transplant on each eye. He then performed a third transplant when the second cornea was rejected.**

**Now, 13 years later, my vision is still great. At my last examination, Dr. Silbert said, "your eyes just love the corneas." His talent and skill is a blessing I appreciate every day of my life. My family and I will always feel indebted to Dr. Silbert and to the Florida Lions Eye Bank for providing the tissue for my cornea transplants.**

**Mrs. Elinor L. Lippman  
Coconut Creek, FL**

## Victor T. Curtin Visiting Professorship

When Dr. Victor T. Curtin retired after 34 years as Voluntary Medical Director of the Florida Lions Eye Bank, officers and directors of the eye bank decided to endow an annual visiting professorship at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in his honor. Since 1996 Bascom Palmer residents and fellows have experienced an outstanding educational opportunity with lectures by renowned ocular specialists from across the country.

On March 23, this year's honoree, Dr. Jerry Shields, ocular oncologist and Professor of Ophthalmology at Wills Eye Hospital at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, presented a grand rounds lecture in which he addressed vascular tumors of the conjunctiva. It was both illuminating and well received.

Dr. Shields is world renowned for his expertise in treating tumors of the orbit, external and internal, including melanoma. Throughout the day, he used his extensive experience as the context in which he conducted additional teaching/training and case review for the BPEI residents and fellows.

*At right: (L-R) Dr. Sander Dubovy, Dr. Jerry Shields, Dr. Victor Curtin. Below with the BPEI residents and fellows.*



### *Letters from Recipients - continued*

*I am very happy with the cornea transplant. I am 91 years old and I can't donate monthly to your eye bank. I live on a very small income with my daughter but I will be forever grateful for your help. Many thanks & God Bless to all of you.*

*Ms. Dorothy Ponticello  
Pembroke Pines, FL*

# Eye Bank Hosts Event Honoring the 100 of First Cornea Transplant

The Florida Lions Eye Bank hosted a special event celebrating the centennial anniversary of the first successful corneal transplant. The cocktail buffet at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, where the Eye Bank is located, honored the date of the first successful human medical transplant – a sight-saving corneal transplant - that was performed on December 7, 1905. For the past 45 years the Eye Bank has been providing corneas for ophthalmic surgical procedures.

At the event, Eye Bank Medical Director Dr. Sander Dubovy welcomed guests and introduced Eye Bank Founder Dr. Victor Curtin, who gave a brief history of the Eye Bank. Dr. William Culbertson, a University of Miami ophthalmology professor, talked about the evolution of the surgical procedures for cornea transplants and Dr.

Richard K. Forster, also a UM ophthalmology professor, introduced guest speaker Craig Hershoff, one of his patients who has had two sight-saving corneal transplants.

Steffi Wilson, the wife of an eye donor, was introduced by the Eye Bank's Director of Donor Coordination Claudette Ward. Steffi's told the moving story of how her late husband, Jerry, had signed up as an organ donor long before his death.

When Jerry passed away in October 2005,



*Florida Lions Eye Bank Founder Dr. Victor Curtin, Eye Bank Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza, Eye Bank Medical Director Dr. Sander Dubovy and Dr. Richard Forster.*



*Cornea and sclera recipients (L-R) Elin Nilsson, Joe Wascura and Donna Cutler*



# th Anniversary

## Day of Unity highlights organ donor need

*Judith A. Cornille, LCSW  
Director of Professional Development*

In the first century B.C., Roman author Publilius Syrus wrote: *“Where there is unity there is always victory.”*

These words underscore the motivation of the Florida Lions Eye Bank, Life Alliance Organ Recovery Agency and the University of Miami Tissue Bank as they came together for a “Day of Unity” on February 21 to raise awareness in minority communities of organ, eye, bone and tissue donation. Because of the lack of available organs, corneas and tissue, the victories come too few and far between for hundreds of thousands who wait. And needlessly, many will die while they wait. Many others will live with blindness or near blindness until a donated cornea becomes available.

With the hope of changing this reality, the Miami-Dade Commission declared February 21 as an official “Day of Unity” to promote healthy living and disease prevention while increasing awareness about organ donation and transplantation among minority communities.

In partnership with radio station WMBM AM 1490 and Bishop Victor T. Curry of the New Birth Baptist Church Cathedral of Faith International, a forum was held at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute to address these issues.

Elizabeth Fout-Caraza, Executive Director of the Florida Lions Eye Bank, emphasized the need for increasing eye donation to those in attendance and in the radio audience: “There are many myths and misconceptions about donation. When we gather together for the purpose of providing education to our minority communities and answering their questions, we move closer to our goal.”

With certainty, saving a life and/or Giving the gift of sight are the victories that will come from our unity with each other and our communities.

Steffi fulfilled Jerry’s wish by donating his eyes to the Florida Lions Eye Bank. This donation helped restore sight in two South Florida patients.

Florida Lions Eye Bank President Mike San Miguel informed the guests about the history of the Lions in helping both sight-impaired and blind people and Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza gave information on what the eye bank has been doing for the past six months.



*(L-R) Claudette Ward, Steffi Wilson holding a photo of her late husband, Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza, Eye Bank Medical Director Dr. Sander Dubovy and Eye Bank President Mike San Miguel.*

# Donations

*Received from November 8, 2005 - April 28, 2006*

The Florida Lions Eye Bank is grateful for the generous and local support of our many contributors. We appreciate the confidence they have shown in our missions to supply corneas and scleras for sight-saving surgery.

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## Eye Bank Month Celebrated in March

The staff of the Florida Lions Eye Bank recently welcomed more than 200 Bascom Palmer employees to help celebrate Governor Jeb Bush's proclamation marking March as Lions Eye Bank Month. A festive event included BPEI's ophthalmologists, nurses, residents, fellows and other staff who enjoyed refreshments and learned about the role of the Florida Lions Eye Bank in *Giving the Gift of Sight*.

Everyone had the opportunity to verify his/her status as an organ donor in the State of Florida Donor Registry. Nearly 30 employees made their decision to be donors during the celebration!

Current Lions President Mike San Miguel and past president Dr. John Del Zio were impressed with the enthusiasm and response of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute staff. As President San Miguel said: "This is so gratifying to see. With each eye donor, we again honor the request of Helen Keller to become 'Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness.'"

