

the VISIONARY

A PUBLICATION FROM THE CENTRAL OHIO LIONS EYE BANK

Grateful Cornea Recipient Deeply Moved by His Gift of Sight

As his vision deteriorated sharply, from 20/10 to “count fingers,” Brett Coffey experienced a decline in his activities as well. He was 18, and just finishing high school when he received a diagnosis of keratoconus, the thinning and distortion of his corneas that was causing his waning sight. He rapidly went from being a baseball catcher to sitting in the front of class, then being unable to pass the eye exam required for his driver’s license. He earned the nickname “Squinty Brett” because squinting was necessary “to see someone I knew,” he says.

For six years, Mr. Coffey says, his optometrist “guided me through a series of contact lenses the best he could,” to try to address the problem. He went from soft lenses to hard, but his condition worsened, even moreso in his right eye. He was sent to cornea specialist Richard Erdey, M.D., who explained that transplantation was the only option available for restoring Mr. Coffey’s vision.

The first transplant was Mr. Coffey’s right eye. He says the difference was dramatic. “Within two weeks I was seeing the leaves on trees again!” In his words, “you don’t realize how much you’ve got until you’ve gone without it - and then get it back again.” It gave him a new perspective. Suddenly, he relates excitedly, he could, “feel safer when driving, read better, recognize people I know, see friends at a distance.” And when his first niece was born, “I could see her expressions!” His left cornea was transplanted 12 months later.

The positive impact of the transplants on Mr. Coffey’s restored life and sight was accompanied by his awareness of the “weight and significance of the eye donations” that made it possible. “To have something like that come out of the pain of the donors’ families and friends is something I don’t think anybody could do without thinking of the implications and sacrifices” involved, he says. He spent the nights before his surgeries doing “a lot of contemplation” about his donors.



Cornea transplant recipient Brett Coffey with his girlfriend

“It’s a process and experience very few people get exposed to,” Mr. Coffey explains. “I think about it regularly – how it’s changed things for me.” Having the transplants was “emotional, but it’s been such a positive for me. And when I think of other transplant patients, I’m blown away.”

His transplants also made Mr. Coffey reconsider his own position on being a donor. He says he thinks that “those willing and able should all be donors.” Now he says he is “taking two people with me wherever I go. All the sights I see, all the experiences I have, I owe to these two people.”

Brett Coffey is our “First Pitch-er” for the 2016 Eye Bank Night with the Clippers on May 15, 2016

Setting Records and Celebrating Sight

A message from Phyllis McNabb, executive director, Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank

Dear Friends,

Sometimes you're so busy you don't know what's happening until you take a moment to look back. When 2016 rolled in, we did just that – and confirmed that the tally of 2015 surgeries created an all-time record for the Eye Bank. Seven hundred seventy-five (775) patients received the Gift of Sight last year, thanks to those whose humanitarian eye donations resulted in this generous legacy. The great work of our technical team, headed by Jason Brosious, and the outstanding placement efforts of David Armstrong combined to make this accomplishment possible. Kudos also go to John Stechschulte, M.D., whose first year as Medical Director was a resounding success.

This year has continued to be high on the busy-ness scale. Along with the brisk pace of donor cases and surgeries, we have added staff, improved benefits, and outsourced human resources administration and IT support. In March, we celebrated Eye Donor Month with our hospitals when Education Coordinators Cristina DeLaSerda and Lisa Perko delivered goodie bags and new posters to each of more than 40 area facilities across 45 Ohio counties. We are so grateful for the efforts of the hospitals in our Eye Donor Program to ensure that families and patients have the opportunity to consider and talk about eye donation. The participation of hospital staffs and liaisons is at the heart of our ability to serve our transplant and surgical patients.

In April, the Eye Bank was part of the state-wide Torch Run announcing the upcoming Transplant Games in Cleveland in June. Cornea transplant recipients are now included in the Games and related events, so we were pleased to have eye donor family member Jeff Mers (husband

of Shannon) and cornea transplant recipient Abby David receive, carry, and pass the torch to mark the event. On their way, we held a reception at The Eye Center, where Eye Bank Board member Brian Turner hosted an emotional program during which Jeff and Abby shared their experiences.

Speaking of events, following our 8th Annual Eye Bank Night at the Clippers on May 15th, we look forward to our



Eye Bank Education Coordinators Cristina DeLaSerda and Lisa Perko

2nd golf outing and hope that you will mark your calendars to participate in “Swinging for Sight” on Monday, October 10th, 2016, at Pinnacle Golf Course.

As always, we thank you for being a part of our vision to open greater opportunities for restoring sight!

Phyllis

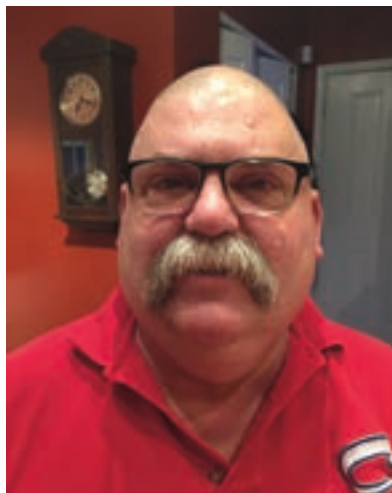
Jeffery Moore

Cornea recipient Jeffery Moore postponed the inevitable as long as possible after receiving his diagnosis of hereditary granular corneal dystrophy, but he says the corneal transplant he had in January went “extremely well – better than I anticipated. I’m just amazed that I’m seeing so well!”

The retired trucker, who is also retired from the military, lists numerous relatives on his mother’s side who have been afflicted with the corneal disease – including his mother, sister, mother’s siblings, and possibly his great grandmother. Those who were

able to have transplants received full-thickness corneas. Mr. Moore was the first among them to have a partial-thickness transplant, performed by Dr. Richard Erdey of Columbus.

Before the surgery Mr. Moore says he was legally blind in his left eye, and could read only the large “E” at the top of the eye chart. His vision had deteriorated significantly. Although his right eye compensated to some extent, “I should not have driven,” he confides. In recent years he had restricted his night driving. (He retired from his truck driving



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Eye Bank Slit Lamp Microscope

Chillicothe Evening Lions Club

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job, which he loved, six years ago.)

Demonstrating his very positive outlook, when asked how he has been doing since his transplant, he exuberantly states, "every day is a holiday; every meal a feast!"

Mr. Moore attributes his positivity to his faith. It has gotten him through some major challenges, including the loss

of his home years ago to a hurricane. "We recovered," he affirms. "I believe there is a purpose for everything." He does not hesitate to say that he feels blessed.

Once the healing has progressed sufficiently from his first transplant, Mr. Moore expects to have the surgery in his other eye. "I hope my right eye goes just

as smoothly," he says. His family and grandchildren are compelling reasons to enjoy retirement. In the years to come, he will be seeing them often – and much better.

DonateLife Ohio's 2016 Transplant Games Torch Run for Life

The Visionary is published by the Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank. Please report all changes of address to: Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank, 262 Neil Avenue, Suite 140, Columbus, OH 43215, or email at info@coleb.org.

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Clockwise from far left: Eye Bank staff members with Torch Runners; Runners Jeff and Abby with Transplant Games Team Ohio Captain Victoria Schmalstig; Recipient Abby David with Donor Family Member Jeff Mers



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- Cornea Recipients Share Stories
- Transplant Games Torch Run



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