Inside:

Scarred by war, cornea recipient finds strength through restored sight

Twin girls’ cornea transplant story takes the stage at EMU

Eye-Bank teams up with northern Michigan TV celebrity for new public service message

Lions fund new microscope for Michigan Eye-Bank Laboratory

Planned Giving provides endless opportunities to help restore sight

Awards, Honors and Recognitions

A CALL FOR CELEBRATION
Eye-Bank friends and family come together for the inaugural Summer Celebration at Midland’s Dow Diamond Ballpark.
There’s something to be said about being the only one—the only eye bank in the state of Michigan. We exist to offer a second chance for sight to more than 1,000 people in the state each year, through corneal transplantation, and to serve humanity by supporting eye and vision research. But being the only one doesn’t mean we act alone. Our mission, the preservation and restoration of sight, can only be accomplished with the help of others. I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Vision, with its stories about the eye donors and their families, volunteers, health care professionals and financial contributors who make what we do possible.

Thank you for your support.

Lisa Langley, Executive Director

It’s been a great year!

1) Cornea Recipient Cassandra Perry, with children Elizabeth and Jack, shared her story of sight restoration at the Michigan Eye-Bank’s Night for Sight. 2) Cornea Recipient Gary Abud coaches Eye-Bank mascot Cornelius during the second Ride-A-Thon fundraiser. 3) Members of the Michigan Eye-Bank’s Big House Big Heart team. 4) During the Golf Benefit program, Executive Director Lisa Langley accepts a check for $1,500 from the Bank of Ann Arbor for being a top ten finalist in the Sweet Sixteen Facebook contest. 5) Cornea recipient Jerry Redoutey with wife Janet at the Michigan Eye-Bank’s inaugural Summer Celebration at Midland’s Dow Diamond Ballpark. 6) Attendees of the inaugural Sighting in on Vision event, sponsored by ETS Logistics, enjoyed a day of friendly skeet-shoot competition. 7) Eye, organ and tissue donation advocates on the steps of the Capitol building during the Donate Life Capital Capitol Celebration. 8) Eye-Bank community engagement staff with Dr. Robert Currier at the second annual Northern Michigan Friendraiser.
Sara Peters is keenly aware of the importance of sight. Although her vision remains intact, she was diagnosed last year with an eye condition that causes holes in her retinas.

Peters, now a recent graduate of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, was required to work on a project with a non-profit organization as part of her capstone class in Public Relations. When her professor suggested she contact the Michigan Eye-Bank, Sara jumped at the opportunity.

After discussing project ideas with Alison Wright, the Eye-Bank’s Community Engagement Manager, Sara embarked on the ambitious journey of bringing the children’s book *The Blind Porcupine* to life as a theatrical production.

Originally written and illustrated by 12-year-old twin cornea recipients Madison and Malia, the book tells the story of a porcupine who receives a second chance for sight through corneal transplantation. It was adapted for the stage by EMU Professor Amy Johnson, who taught a public speaking class Peters had taken.

“So many people have contributed their time and talent,” Peters says. In addition to Professor Johnson, the Lions Club of Ypsilanti at EMU agreed to co-host the play, members of the EMU Forensics Team stepped up as performers and Starbucks graciously donated refreshments.

“Working with Sara has been wonderful,” says Wright. “The support she drummed up from the EMU community was amazing and, thanks to her, we had this great event that allowed us to present the topic of eye donation in a fun, entertaining way.”

*The Blind Porcupine* Play premiered on June 9, at the EMU Student Center Auditorium. At the conclusion of the 45-minute production, performers and affiliated organizations participated in a meet-and-greet session with attendees over refreshments. Madison and Malia were on hand to sign copies of their book.

“It was a great night,” says Wright. “All the pieces came together beautifully, and the audience really seemed to enjoy the whole event.”

To view the performance, visit MichiganEyeBank.org > News & Events > Videos
Saad Taha is proud to be a U.S. citizen, living right here in Michigan. But it wasn’t long ago that terrorists nearly killed him for his efforts to assist U.S. forces in Iraq.

Although Taha was born an Iraqi citizen, he grew up in Kuwait, which he considered his home for many years. “Kuwait was different than Iraq,” he explains. “It was much more like the United States.”

It was in Kuwait that Taha went to school, and was encouraged to learn English. As an adult, he worked as a Supervisor for Kuwait Airways. When he married his wife, May, who was also Iraqi, he brought her to Kuwait. But through it all, Taha remained a citizen of Iraq. His citizenship forever altered the trajectory of his life when, in 1990, Saddam Hussein called for the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

The Kuwaiti government gave Iraqi citizens living in the country two choices: Go back to Iraq, or stay and fight. Torn between his home and the country of his birth, Taha made the difficult decision to return to Baghdad with May. “I loved Kuwait,” he explains, “but I couldn’t fight my own country.”

For the next 13 years, Taha lived under the regime of Saddam Hussein. “It was 13 years of hell,” he recalls. When U.S. forces arrived in 2003, they sought him out as a translator because of his English skills. He had turned down their offers three times before, but in May of that year, a U.S. Army Captain was able to convince him to work with them. Within two weeks, Taha had been made Chief Interpreter, with 20 people working under him.
According to him, many Iraqis working with the United States were scared to let others find out, but he was not afraid. He viewed what he was doing as being helpful to everyone – making it so people could communicate with one another. But others didn't see it that way; they thought he was a spy.

Soon enough, he was receiving threatening letters and messages written in graffiti on the gate to his home. The Captain offered to put a tank in front of his house, but Taha turned him down because he believed that would make it look like he really was a spy, when he was doing nothing wrong. He refused to be intimidated.

“I didn’t pay attention to the threats,” he says. Perhaps he should have.

The morning of July 22, 2003 started off like any other morning. But when Taha left his house and went to his car, he found a rock in front of it. When he moved it, a bomb went off in his face. The explosion drew his wife and 12-year-old son out of the house; they found him lying in the street, bleeding and broken.

Neighbours rushed Taha to the hospital. When U.S. Army officials heard what had happened, they had him transferred to local Army hospital, then to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. The damage from the bomb was severe – shrapnel was lodged in his face and eyes, and he lost his legs.

“Most people thought I wouldn’t make it,” he says.

At Walter Reed, May had to make all the decisions for her husband. She and their son traveled to the United States with him, but she spoke very little English, so she needed translators just to talk to the doctors.

“In the beginning, it was very hard,” she recalls, adding that the nights spent at a hotel in an unfamiliar country were especially difficult, but she knew she had to hold things together for their son. “I had to be strong,” she says.

After more than a month at Walter Reed, Taha was transferred to St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, where he received eight months of rehabilitation. As part of his treatment, he underwent cornea transplants, performed by Michigan Eye-Bank Board member Dr. John Barletta, and retinal surgeries, saving one of his eyes. His other eye could not be saved.

“It’s my life,” Taha says of his remaining eye. “Without it, I’d be blind. I survived. I lost my legs, but I’m still laughing and smiling. I wouldn’t have made it without my eye.”

When he healed enough to be released from the hospital, Taha and his family set up their lives in Ypsilanti. It was quite an adjustment – not only were they living in a vastly different country, they were trying to move past what they had been through.

Taha admits it was hard to adapt, but in the end, “I had no choice,” he explains. “I’m not going to get back what I lost.”

These days, the Tahas consider Ypsilanti home. Since their arrival in 2003, they’ve become U.S. citizens and bought their own home. May speaks English fluently, thanks to ESL classes at Washtenaw Community College and a neighborhood group with women from around the world. Their son is a student at Eastern Michigan University.

“...I survived. I lost my legs, but I’m still laughing and smiling. I wouldn’t have made it without my eye.”

Dr. John Barletta with Saad Taha during a routine eye care visit.

Taha’s recovery is ongoing. He sees Dr. Barletta and his retinal specialist regularly to check on the condition of his eye, which still contains bits of shrapnel. Shrapnel is also visible in his skin. But his attitude is positive.

The Taha family’s journey from Iraq to the United States was arduous, but Taha is happy with their destination – and grateful for his eyesight. “This is my home,” he says. “If I had to do it again, I’d do it again.”
The Michigan Eye-Bank's newest Public Service Announcement made its debut at Dow Diamond during the Summer Celebration. Bob Garner, former host of Michigan Out-of-Doors, donated his time and talent to appear in the PSA, urging viewers to conserve the state's most precious natural resource – “our eyesight.” Garner was also on hand at the for the PSA's debut at the Celebration.

“Dr. Currier decided to call the event a ‘Friendraiser’ because he wanted to build relationships between the involved charities, like the Eye-Bank, and local business and community leaders,” explains Alison Wright, the Eye-Bank's Community Engagement Manager. “It definitely seems to have worked out that way.”

“Working with Bob was a great experience,” says Wright. “From our first meeting, he was prepared with ideas for what he should say, and he knows exactly what to do in front of the camera.”

Friends and supporters of the Michigan Eye-Bank gathered at Midland’s Dow Diamond ballpark on August 20 for a day of camaraderie and fun celebrating the Eye-Bank’s accomplishments during the past year, and the many opportunities that lie ahead.

“We wanted to find a way to thank everyone for their dedication this year, and to get people revved up about the future,” explains Lisa Langley, Executive Director of the Michigan Eye-Bank. “We were just awarded a very generous grant from the Midland-based Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, supporting our efforts to increase awareness about the Michigan Organ Donor Registry, so it only made sense to celebrate here.”

About 250 people were able to attend the Celebration, which included an awards dinner and a Great Lakes Loons baseball game. Between the two, there was a pre-game gathering, featuring Donate Life Stations sponsored by the Gerstacker Foundation. Fireworks capped off the evening and the Loons won!

New MEB Public Service Announcement features a familiar friend

The Michigan Eye-Bank’s newest Public Service Announcement made its debut at Dow Diamond during the Summer Celebration. Bob Garner, former host of Michigan Out-of-Doors, donated his time and talent to appear in the PSA, urging viewers to conserve the state’s most precious natural resource – “our eyesight.” Garner was also on hand at the for the PSA’s debut at the Celebration.

Garner’s involvement with the Eye-Bank began with a chance meeting at the Northern Michigan Friendraiser, hosted by Alpena-based ophthalmologist Robert Currier, M.D., in September, 2010. The event brought together representatives from several Michigan-based organizations, and helped to raise awareness about the Eye-Bank.

“Dr. Currier decided to call the event a ‘Friendraiser’ because he wanted to build relationships between the involved charities, like the Eye-Bank, and local business and community leaders,” explains Alison Wright, the Eye-Bank’s Community Engagement Manager. “It definitely seems to have worked out that way.”

After learning about the Eye-Bank’s mission of sight restoration, Garner was happy to get involved. Not only did he appear in the PSA, he helped conceptualize it.

“Working with Bob was a great experience,” says Wright. “From our first meeting, he was prepared with ideas for what he should say, and he knows exactly what to do in front of the camera.”

To see the PSA, titled “The Conservation of Sight”, visit MichiganEyeBank.org > News & Events > Videos.
Shared Vision Awards

The Michigan Eye-Bank was proud to present four special people with Shared Vision Awards at the Summer Celebration. These awards recognize individuals and organizations that have shown extraordinary support for the Eye-Bank’s mission of sight restoration.

**James Banner, M.D.**

Dr. Banner is the former Medical Examiner for Ionia and Montcalm counties.

Dale Wiersma, the Eye-Bank’s Western Michigan Regional Coordinator, worked with Dr. Banner regularly. “He often worked his schedule and procedures around the donation process,” Wiersma says of Dr. Banner’s commitment to eye, organ and tissue donation.

Additionally, Dr. Banner worked with Medical Examiners in several other counties in northern and mid-Michigan to ensure they were on board with cornea donation, too.

**Charles Iknayan, M.D.**

Dr. Iknayan is the Pathologist at Aspirus Grand View Hospital in Ironwood.

Robb Chabie, the Eye-Bank’s Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator, presented the Shared Vision Award to Dr. Iknayan during the Celebration. Chabie has worked with Dr. Iknayan for nearly 20 years.

“He regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty,” explains Chabie. “He understands that time is of the essence when we recover tissue, so he’ll come in during his off-time to ensure that the necessary work on his end is completed.”

**Lynnwood Mast**

Lynnwood “Lynn” Mast, a member of the Fremont Lions Club, has been actively involved with the Eye-Bank since the 1980s, when he helped coordinate Eye-Bank substations in his area, ensuring that donated eye tissue made it back to the Eye-Bank in time for transplantation. While advancements in tissue preservation have since eliminated the need for substations, Mast has remained a committed volunteer, most recently working on the **I Joined!** campaign.

“To date, Lynn’s efforts have helped convince more than 700 people to add their names to the Donor Registry,” says Alison Wright, the Eye-Bank’s Community Engagement Manager. “As a volunteer, he has put in hundreds of hours and driven thousands of miles to ensure the Eye-Bank is represented in northwest Michigan.”

**Kathleen Swartz, R.N., B.S.N.**

Kathleen Swartz is the Organ Donation Program Coordinator at Beaumont Hospital-Royal Oak. She played an active role in Gift of Life Michigan’s Donor Drive 2010, an initiative aimed at increasing the number of registered eye, organ and tissue donors in the state of Michigan, by organizing multiple Michigan Organ Donor Registry drives at the hospital. She has also taken a creative approach to engaging the public about donation.

“Kathy used a life-sized game of ‘Operation’ to illustrate how many lives one person can save or enhance by signing up as a donor,” explains Carrie Wolverton, the Eye-Bank’s Manager of Professional Education. “She’s always looking for opportunities to raise awareness about the gifts of sight and life. Thanks in large part to her efforts, Royal Oak Beaumont ranks fourth in the state in terms of donor registrations at hospitals.”

During the Celebration, Wolverton presented Swartz with the Shared Vision Award, as well as an actual ‘Operation’ board game as a token of the Eye-Bank’s appreciation.
Star Awards

Michigan Eye-Bank Ambassadors Madison and Malia were honored with a Star Award on April 13 for their efforts on behalf of the Eye-Bank. The 12-year-old twins use their personal experiences with corneal transplantation to inform and inspire the public about eye, organ and tissue donation.

Sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Greater Kalamazoo and the Kalamazoo Gazette, Star Awards are given annually to recognize groups and individuals for volunteer work performed throughout the year.

As Ambassadors, Madison and Malia have tirelessly promoted donation, addressing groups of up to 200 people – but perhaps their greatest achievement is “The Blind Porcupine,” a children’s book they wrote and illustrated at age nine, which tells the story of a porcupine’s sight restoration through corneal transplantation.

“Their book has 6,000 copies in circulation around the state and is available at a few local stores, libraries, and through many Lions Clubs,” explains Alex Teska, Community Engagement Associate for the Michigan Eye-Bank, who nominated the girls for the Star Award. “All contributions for ‘The Blind Porcupine’ go to the Eye-Bank, and those funds are used to keep the book in circulation.”

Michigan Eye-Bank Ambassadors Madison and Malia proudly display their Shining Star Award, given for their dedication to raising awareness about the importance of joining the donor registry.
Founder’s Awards

The Founder’s Award is Midwest Eye-Banks’ highest honor, and is given based on the individual’s contribution to the success of the organization. This year, two people received the Award.

**John Krienke, Ph.D.**

John Krienke, Ph.D., is a member of the Michigan Eye-Bank Board of Directors, longtime Eye-Bank volunteer and a devoted member of the Ann Arbor Host Lions Club.

“Thousands of lives have been touched as a result of the work John has done, and continues to do, on behalf of the Eye-Bank and Lions Clubs International,” says Kevin Ross, President and CEO of Midwest Eye-Banks. “There are no words big enough to say ‘thank you’ on behalf of all those people, but it’s clearly time to recognize John Krienke among those few special leaders who can truly consider themselves pillars of the Michigan Eye-Bank’s mission.”

Krienke received his award at the Michigan Eye-Bank’s Summer Celebration in Midland on August 20.

**Busharat Ahmad, M.D., FACS**

Busharat Ahmad, M.D., FACS, of Monroe and formerly of Marquette, is a renowned ophthalmologist and current Michigan Eye-Bank Board member.

A native of Punjab, Pakistan, and educated in England, Pakistan and India, Dr. Ahmad came to Marquette as a recent medical school graduate in 1971. He quickly established himself as a respected ophthalmologist, and spent the next 20 years working with patients throughout Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. During this time, he also served as Medical and Surgical Director for the U.P. Lions Eye Bank, and was instrumental in its joining forces with the Michigan Eye-Bank in 1989.

He has received numerous awards and honors throughout his career – most recently, a Benjamin Rush Award for Citizenship and Community Service from the American Medical Association.

“Dr. Ahmad’s achievements are too numerous to list,” says Ross. “He has been President of such organizations as the Eye Bank Association of America, the Upper Peninsula Medical Society, the Marquette-Alger County Medical Society and the Marquette Area Chamber of Commerce. He has also chaired countless medical and community committees and been recognized by the Marquette Chapter of Kiwanis. It’s enough to make a person wonder how he had the time to accomplish so much.”
The Michigan Eye-Bank laboratory is home to a new Konan specular microscope, thanks to funding from local Lions Clubs and a fund-matching grant from the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF).

“We’ve long relied on specular microscopes to examine tissue at a magnified level,” explains Kristen McCoy, the Eye-Bank’s Vice President, Clinical Operations. “The information they provide is critical in determining the suitability of donor tissue.”

The new scope features numerous improvements that allow the Eye-Bank to provide its surgeons with more complete information about each eye tissue, helping to ensure the best possible outcomes for each patient. However, like most precision laboratory equipment used in the recovery and evaluation of human tissue, it also comes with a hefty price tag: $17,850.

Under the guidance of former Board member, the late A. Charles Weir, Executive Director Lisa Langley set to work to obtain the necessary funding. She knew the LCIF offered fund-matching grants, but in order to be eligible, the Eye-Bank would first have to find Lions Clubs willing to provide the funds to be matched.

The Clubs of District 11B-1 and the Bretton Woods Lions Club stepped up, and offered a total of $8,925 – half the cost of the new microscope. After getting authorization from the leadership of District 11B-1, the Eye-Bank’s local District, Langley applied for the LCIF grant. Her application was approved.

“I’m so pleased that the Lions chose to support the Eye-Bank in this way,” says Langley. “We’ve been a State Project of the Michigan Lions since 1971. After 40 years, we know that we can still count on them to help ensure the Eye-Bank has everything it needs to be a world-class organization.”

What is a specular microscope?

Specular microscopes allow Eye-Bank technicians to view and count cells on the cornea’s innermost layer. Humans are born with a finite number of these endothelial cells, and the cells die off as we age. Before being deemed surgically suitable, every donor cornea is evaluated under a specular microscope to ensure its cell characteristics are favorable to provide healthy eyesight to the transplant recipient.

Top photo (from left): Barb Treichel, District Governor of Lions District 11 B-1, with Michigan Eye-Bank lab staff Katie Ableson, Monika Titus, Lauren Johnson, Kim Traczyk, Michael Titus and Lab Manager Kyle Mavin.
Your sight-restoring legacy

When you include a provision in your will or trust for the benefit of the Michigan 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

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.

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 Lisa Langley can help provide specialized language, and your own legal counsel can offer estate planning guidance and preparation of the necessary documents.

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.

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.

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 Michigan 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 Michigan Eye-Bank is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Its Federal Tax ID number is 27-3107692. Your gift to the Michigan 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 Lisa Langley at (734) 780-2628 or lisa@michiganeyebank.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.

One man, one legacy

As the Michigan Eye-Bank’s founding surgeon, John W. Henderson, M.D., Ph.D. was committed to the Eye-Bank’s mission of sight restoration and preservation. He knew that, upon his death, he wanted to continue to support the Eye-Bank, so he arranged a bequest in his will.

“His whole adult life was devoted to ophthalmology, and the Michigan Eye-Bank was a very important part of that,” explains Henderson’s daughter, Louise McFarland. “It was dear to his heart, and he chose to leave a gift to the Eye-Bank as part of his legacy.”

McFarland says it makes her happy to think about those who can see as a result of her father’s dedication to the Eye-Bank. “Hopefully others will (also) find joy and personal satisfaction in leaving gifts that will help those on a journey to restore their sight,” she adds.
Save the date!
The Michigan Eye-Bank
*Gift of Sight* Golf Classic
Saturday, June 2, 2012
at a *NEW LOCATION!*
The Polo Fields-Washtenaw Golf and Country Club in Ypsilanti, MI

$125 Per Golfer
Includes 18 holes of golf, cart, light lunch before or on the course, awards, tee gift, prizes, silent auction and an All-American BBQ Dinner with an open bar.

**Can’t make it, but still want to support the event?**
Consider becoming an event sponsor or hole sponsor, or donate items to the silent auction.

For more information about sponsorship opportunities or to register for the event, call (800) 247-7250.