Donor & Family Recognition Program
Welcome.

Our recognition program honors those who are the foundation of donation – donors and family members. They have generously and selflessly supported the gift of sight.

We are experiencing events in our world that we have not seen in a long, long time. Because of the global pandemic, so much has been set aside—maybe for just awhile—perhaps forever.

At Lions Gift of Sight, we were not able to hold a recognition service in 2020, which made our year feel incomplete. While not yet ready to host a large in-person event, we simply could not go another year without recognizing our donors and thanking their families and friends. Our compromise is this pre-recorded, online tribute to eye and cornea donors from both 2019 and 2020.

Whether in person or online, our gratitude to our eye donors is equally great!
Program

Opening Remarks
Jodi Altenhofen
Community Liaison
Lions Gift of Sight

Lions Gift of Sight Welcome
Sean Poppoff
Executive Director
Lions Gift of Sight

A Surgeon Honors Donors
Joshua Hou, M.D.
Medical Director, Lions Gift of Sight
Professor, University of Minnesota
Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Neurosciences
A Scientist Honors Donors

Deb Ferrington, Ph.D.
Professor, University of Minnesota
Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Neurosciences

Paige’s Story

Paige Halfmann
Corneal Transplant Recipient

Donor Photograph Presentation

Closing Remarks

Jodi Altenhofen
Lions Gift of Sight Donors

Jerry L. Akerson
LuAnn Alexander
Joseph Allen
Philip G. Allmon
Al Alsleben
Aidan David Anderson
David “Drew” Anderson
Patricia M. Anderson
Richard “Tim” Anderson
Delores R. Antila
Molly M. Antila
Gladys Applequist
Karon E. Armstrong
Michael A. Armstrong
Eugene J. Arnold
Ronald “Ron” Duane Asleson
Ethan Nathaniel Wallace Bah
Joshua Bahr
Ernest H. Banks
Terry C. Barnett
Tyler Scott Baron
William Barte

Betty Barthman
Mike Barton
Mark R. Basco
Bertram Persaud Basdeo
Tammy Lynn Basswood
LeRoy “Pudge” Beaudoin
Jileen Beckey
Gary Lee Behl
Steven Louis Bellanger
Robert Beltrame
James Alan Benedict
Wes Bennerotte
Diane R. Bennett
Christi Lee Benson
Sue Berg
Brooks Bergersen
SSG Juan Berrones, Jr.
Darla J. Berry
Betty F. Bethea
Robert Warren Bicknell
Vicki D. Bielke
Emilia “Amy” Biorn
Kathe Birch
Leiah Anne Bjerkness
Adam Ace Blaser
Catie Newman Boardman
Kathy Boman
Luther M. Bonow
Marylynne Boone
Gary Bordner
Diane H. Brazil
Maria Juliana Breads
Holly Elizabeth Breymaier
Wayne D. Briggs
Brady Arthur Broedehl
Shemar Jamal Brown
Todd Arthur Brown
Yvonne E. Brown
Karen Brueske
Leonard L. Brunette
Christopher Bruns
Bernardine Bryniarski
William H. Bryson Jr
Michael T. Buchanan
Glendell G. Buckner II
Bob Burdick
David W. Capps
Daniel D. Carlson
Michael Carlson
Dorothy Cary
Chester Cashman
Jessie Lynn Cervigni
George “Jo” Christiansen
Aaron Michael Christianson
Anne J. Christofferson
Abigail Marie Clark
Nancy Clark
Jason Thaddeus (JT Money - Jay Man) Clark, Jr.
Terry Commerford
Anthony E. Corriea
Teresa JoAnn Cory
Dan Cottew
Thomas Cunningham
Joan M. Curti
Ellen Damberg
Eugene D. David
Sarah “Sally” Davis
Kathy Davison
Garry Dearborn
Lee Debele
Robert Frank Decowski
Ken Denhardt
Bonnie L. Denn
Mikhail Dereschuk
Randy L. Dibble
James F. Diemert
Helen M. Dittberner
Larry S. Dobszewicz
Jessica Jo Donahue
Patrick Driscoll
Mathis Israel Dudley
Keith I. Duff
Carolynn Lee Swensrud Duncan
Desiree Duncan
Jeanette Eaton
Dianne Marie Ebbenga
Robert G. Egnoski
Vincent Ehlert-Mackie
James L. Eiynck
Michael Elavsky
Shirley June Emery
Dennis Engelmann
Dorothy Englert
Mary Elizabeth Erickson
Patricia Erickson
Eileen Marie Espinosa
Chad Evenson
Kathy Fandrich
Duane Fast
Jim Fisher
Samuel “Sam” M. Fleck
Rachel Florin
John E. Fodstad
Waylon James Fontaine
Marlys K. Foss
Jeanne M. Foudray
George “Bud” Fousek
Nicole Foyt
Bruce L. Frankoski
Janet Fox Fredline
Celeste Opal (Pourier) Fritsch
Michael D. Gallob
Quentin Loren Garlets
John William “Bill” Garrison
Jeanne Gearhart
Dennis Gellert
Marcella Gerrard
Genevieve Gibson
Jen Gilbertson
Roxanne Gillen
Mary Beth Lizotte  
SFC Patrick J. Loftesnes  
Ethan J. Loitz  
Kevin Loken  
Colleen Loney  
Allan Lotsberg  
Gerald Lucus  
Jeffrey Luedke  
Patricia Ann Lund  
Judy Luppino  
Kim Madigan  
Tiffany R. Madison  
Cato Manifold  
Danna Rena Towns Taylor  
  Massey  
Judy Mausolf  
Steve McGree  
Nicholas John James  
  McGuinness III  
Lady Marilyn “Cissie” McLeod  
Randy McManus  
Ryan William McPherson  
Mary C. Meier  
Gabrielle “Gabie” Marie  
  Meister  
Peter J. Mesher  
James C. Meyer  
Aidan Daniel Miller  
LeRoy H. Miller  
Roger Lyn Miller  
Yvonne Moen  
Kermit Molkenbur  
Asher P. Moore  
Alvin Moore, Jr.  
Bruce Moravec  
Lion James “Jim” Morcomb  
Rodney P. Morris  
Deane Anthony Morrow  
Barbara J. Mortenson  
Susan Emma Mountain  
Charles Myllykangas  
Ross Naegele  
Tim Neeb  
John Calvin Neimeyer, Jr.  
Anthony Lee Nelson  
Diane E. Nelson  
Joyce Lorraine Nelson  
Randall R. Nelson  
Walter Clair Nelson  
Paul M. Nesvig
Keith P. Shafer, Jr.          Richard J. Stevens
Mark W. Shankey              Darryll E Stohl
Mark Shaw                    Kurt Arthur Stotts
Claire Shinn                 Katherine E. Stouvenel
Thomas Anthony Shirek        Adrienne Strand
Scott C. Sickel              Duane D. Strand
Susan Gail Sizemore          Beth Strickland
Jeanette Skoglund            Rev. Fred Stroebel
Mary Kay Sladky              David Matthew Sundquist
Donna M. Smith               Bob Sutphen
Jason Albert Smith           Bruce Oliver Sutter
Mary Smith                   Brent Allyn Svor
Phyllis Snustad              Stanley Kraig Swanson
Marvin Douglas Soehren       Vera Swanson
Nancy (Massari) Sparano      Rita Swift
Mark Speltz                  Tom Tannuzzo
Lion Jerry A. Spencer        David Keith Theusch
Mary Helen St. Cyr           Verna M. Thieke
Audrey Rodestrom St. Martin  Imants “Karl” Thiel
Frances Mary Standke         Ronald G. Thompson
Colleen Stauffenecker        Debra Kay Tjepkes
Joan “Joni” Stehn            Austin Sterling Tolle
Keith Stein                  Elaine Tonolli
Leif Merrill Stennes         Donna Torres
Patrick Stevens              Susan Torson
What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

— Helen Keller (1880 - 1968)
Lions Clubs International & Eye Banks

In 1925, Helen Keller addressed the service organization Lions Clubs International, challenging Lions to become “Knights of the Blind” (see page 18). Lions responded enthusiastically and made restoring vision and assisting the visually-impaired their primary mission.

Lions Gift of Sight
In 1960, Minnesota Lions partnered with the University of Minnesota to establish the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank (now Lions Gift of Sight). This historic event marked the creation of the first human tissue donation organization and only eye bank in Minnesota.

Since founding, thanks to the generosity of donors and family members, Lions Gift of Sight has provided more than 36,000 corneas for transplant and more than 38,000 eyes or corneas for research and medical education. The eye bank also distributes donated sclera (the white of the eye) for restorative eye surgeries. Every day, we strive to restore sight through eye donation. We are dedicated to our mission, knowledgeable about our profession, and expert in the services we provide.

Lions Gift of Sight is one of the top eye banks in the world in providing eyes for research. We approach families about donation for research because we firmly believe that research is the key to eliminating worldwide blindness. Hundreds of researchers use donated eye tissue in the quest to prevent, treat, or cure eye diseases such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and retinitis pigmentosa. Donated eyes also help researchers develop new medications and surgical techniques.

Worldwide, more than 2 million people suffer from corneal blindness. In lesser-developed countries, corneal disease is second only to cataracts (a clouding of the eye’s lens) in leading to blindness. The world needs qualified eye banks dedicated to the craft.
Lions Eye Banks & the Barcelona Principles
Lions Gift of Sight was founded as an eye bank firmly rooted in the Lions’ tradition of service to the community and dedication to helping the sight-impaired. As a Lions eye bank, we must follow Lions Clubs International Eye Bank Program Guidelines, adhere to the Lions Code of Ethics, and subscribe to the Barcelona Principles. What might that mean? Here are a few highlights.

- Lions eye banks encourage, promote, improve, and establish Lions eye banking internationally, so that quality eye tissue for corneal transplants, research, and other medical purposes may be provided. They publicize the role and service of eye banks.

- The Lions Code of Ethics was established from a business point of view, and Lions club members pledge to accept no profit or success at the price of their own self-respect lost because of unfair advantage taken or because of questionable acts. They give sympathy to those in distress, aid to the weak, and substance to the needy.

- The Barcelona Principles are an agreement on the use of human donated tissue for ocular transplantation, research, and future technologies. The Principles are put out by the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Associations, an internationally-recognized association that supports the World Health Organization's (WHO) Initiative for Medical Products of Human Origin, and the WHO Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation.

Kindness and Diversity
Lions Clubs International chose kindness and diversity as the theme for the 2020-2021 Lions’ year. A noble choice for this 1.4 million-member service organization:. The world is facing many challenges. Greater good can only be achieved when we join together as one. Love. Compassion. Inclusion. Connection. These tools will help us engineer solutions.
What is an eye bank?
An eye bank is the link between people who donate their eyes and people who help restore sight. Eye banks obtain, medically evaluate, and distribute eyes that are donated by humanitarian-minded people for use in transplantation, research, and education.

Can the whole eye be transplanted?
No. At this time, only the cornea or sclera can be transplanted. The entire eye can be used for research and education.

What is the cornea?
The cornea is the clear tissue in the front of the eye. It is the main focusing element of the eye. Should the cornea become cloudy from disease, infection, or injury, vision would be dramatically reduced.

What is a cornea transplant?
A cornea transplant is the surgical procedure that replaces an unhealthy cornea with a healthy donor cornea. People receive transplants because of corneal blindness caused by bacterial, fungal, or viral infections or by inherited and degenerative diseases. Corneas can also be damaged by chemical burns, scratches, and other traumatic injuries. More than 90 percent of corneal transplant operations are successful, making this operation the most successful transplant procedure that exists.

How common are cornea transplants?
A cornea transplant is one of the most frequently-performed human transplants. Nationwide, nearly 50,000 corneal transplants are done each year. Corneas have been transplanted to patients ranging in age from only a few days to 103 years old.

How soon after a donation must a cornea be transplanted?
A cornea is usually transplanted within three to seven days of donation.
Become Involved - Volunteer

Volunteering at Lions Gift of Sight is a wonderful and rewarding way to share skills and expertise, meet new people, and be a part of a community committed to improving peoples’ lives through eye donation.

Our volunteers are crucial to our mission, and anyone who would like to donate time and talents is welcomed—and encouraged—to apply. From office work to lab support to event assistance, we have a variety of volunteer opportunities available.

Lions Gift of Sight offers:

• Flexible scheduling
• Training for volunteer positions
• Volunteer recognition
• Complimentary parking

For more information, please contact our Community Services Liaison:

Jodi Altenhofen
Lions Gift of Sight
1000 Westgate Drive, Suite 260
Saint Paul, MN  55114
612-624-0446
LGSFamilySvcs@umn.edu

“THE BEST WAY to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

— Mahatma Gandhi
Helen Keller: Champion of the Blind

Born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1880, Helen Keller contracted a fever at 19 months of age that left her both blind and deaf. She lived in darkness and silence until a miraculous teacher, Anne Sullivan, broke through 7-year-old Helen's isolation and taught her sign language, Braille, and speech.

All her life Helen was a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. In 1925, she attended the Lions Clubs International Convention and gave a short speech asking the 8-year-old service organization to help the blind. This speech so moved Lions club members that they have worked to assist the visually-impaired and to eradicate preventable blindness ever since.

Dear Lions and Ladies:

I suppose you have heard the legend that represents opportunity as a capricious lady, who knocks at every door but once, and if the door isn’t opened quickly, she passes on, never to return. And that is as it should be. Lovely, desirable ladies won’t wait. You have to go out and grab ‘em.

I am your opportunity. I am knocking at your door. I want to be adopted. The legend doesn’t say what you are to do when several beautiful opportunities present themselves at the same door. I guess you have to choose the one you love best. I hope you will adopt me. I am the youngest here, and what I offer you is full of splendid opportunities for service....
Try to imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly stricken blind today. Picture yourself stumbling and groping at noonday as in the night; your work, your independence, gone. In that dark world wouldn’t you be glad if a friend took you by the hand and said, “Come with me and I will teach you how to do some of the things you used to do when you could see”? That is just the kind of friend the American Foundation is going to be to all the blind in this country if seeing people will give it the support it must have.

You have heard how through a little word dropped from the fingers of another, a ray of light from another soul touched the darkness of my mind and I found myself, found the world, found God. It is because my teacher learned about me and broke through the dark, silent imprisonment which held me that I am able to work for myself and for others. It is the caring we want more than money. The gift without the sympathy and interest of the giver is empty. If you care, if we can make the people of this great country care, the blind will indeed triumph over blindness.

The opportunity I bring to you, Lions, is this: To foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness; no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you Lions, you who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?

I thank you.

Lions Clubs International Convention
Cedar Point, Ohio
June 30, 1925
Lions Gift of Sight thanks Minnesota Lions club members, Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation, and individual donors for the financial support that made this program possible.

Lions Gift of Sight also extends special thanks to the musicians who provided the background music for the donor photo presentation:

The Barnett Family and Yuri Liberzon
Madison and Kirby Karpan and Friends
Maureen Karpan and Frog Legs
Maud Hixon