The Eye-Bank hosted its first Wing Chu, M.D. Cornea Fellow Day on August 27 in its offices at 120 Wall Street in New York City. Named for Dr. Wing Chu, who was The Eye-Bank’s medical director for 30 years until he passed away in 2012, the inaugural Cornea Fellow Day provided an opportunity for participants to become familiar with the purpose and mission of eye banking.

The day was attended by 10 physicians who are currently in cornea fellowships with leading medical centers in the New York City area. The full day was divided into a didactic session in the morning followed by a wet lab in the afternoon which offered the fellows hands on instruction for performing Decemet’s Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty (DMEK) surgery using donor corneas prepared by The Eye-Bank. According to The Eye-Bank’s Executive Director, Patricia Dahl, the wet lab provided participating cornea fellows with a unique opportunity to practice performing a cutting-edge procedure, which otherwise might only be observed in an operating room.

According to attendee Dr. Bhairaja Shrestha, an international fellow from the Drishti Eye Hospital in Nepal, the rare opportunity to practice the DMEK procedure at The Eye-Bank will allow him to treat patients in his country with an affordable and highly successful technique for curing corneal disease.

A New Biography About Eye-Bank Founder R. Townley Paton, M.D. is Now Available

A heart-warming and compelling book about R. Townley Paton, M.D., his life, his family history and how he came to be known as the father of eye banking has been authored by a person who knew the man as his own father—his son, David Paton. *Insight: R. Townley Paton and the World’s First Eye Bank, An Annotated Biography by His Son,* reveals the amazing story of how life and circumstances were aligned to bring forth an individual with the character and vision to create The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration in New York City in 1944. The book offers an historic accounting of how the successful surgeon who trained with Dr. William Holland Wilmer at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore before moving to New York and becoming established as a premier ophthalmologist and surgeon, eventually saw the need for a way to cure more individuals of cornea blindness if only there was a reliable supply of donor tissue.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Aida de Acosta Breckinridge who was instrumental in first helping to establish the Wilmer Eye Institute and then supporting Dr. Paton’s dream of an eye bank by applying her amazing intuition and highly-skilled fundraising experience to making the unique organization of The Eye-Bank a reality.

Filled with often times humorous anecdotes — such as causing the family’s housekeeper to give notice after finding late night donations in the household refrigerator — to sobering truths of being publicly chastised by the medical community for pursuing eye donations and recovering donor tissue that could cure another patient of blindness, the biography provides a never before-view of the life and experiences of R. Townley Paton and how the field of eye banking came to be.

Continued on page 5
Legislative Actions Offer New Yorkers More Ways to Sign Up in the State Registry

Much was accomplished in Albany this year to advance eye, organ and tissue donation and our volunteers who participated in these efforts deserve a resounding thank you for helping to make these positive changes in legislation happen.

On August 27, 2016, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law legislation lowering the age of enrollment in the New York State Donate Life Registry. The new law, which takes effect on February 14, 2017, permits New Yorkers ages 16 or older to enroll in the Registry thereby removing barriers to what young adults feel is an important community responsibility — signing up to be eye, organ and tissue donors. Once enacted, it is predicted that the law will instigate a steep increase in Donor Registry enrollments especially through the Department of Motor Vehicles when newly licensed drivers ages 16 and up will be allowed to sign up. New York now joins 48 other states in allowing young adults to enroll. In New York State, individuals 16 and older will be allowed to enroll in the Donate Life Registry, although actual donation for those under the age of 18 can only occur with parental consent.

Another accomplishment this year gives individuals the opportunity to sign up to be eye, organ and tissue donors when completing the New York State Health Benefit Exchange application. As the state’s portal for purchasing affordable health insurance, it is a perfect opportunity for New Yorkers to make the decision to enroll while considering other healthcare options and choices. Similar portals are being sought for including the donor designation question.

Additional post-election news worth noting is that the New York State Board of Elections has helped increase the number of sign ups in the Donate Life Registry by allowing individuals to enroll when they become registered voters. In this past presidential election season, when voter registration was on an increase, many New Yorkers also took the opportunity to enroll in the Donate Life Registry.

Looking ahead, the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD), which has assumed the administrative and promotional responsibility of the state’s Donate Life Registry, is working to transform it into a much more user-friendly tool including a truly electronic registration capability. It is anticipated that the new and improved online registry will be functional within the first half of 2017.

Cornea Fellows Are Introduced to Eyebanking

Continued from page 1

Presentations and instruction were provided by The Eye-Bank’s Medical Director Michelle Rhee, M.D., George Florakis, M.D., Chair of The Eye-Bank’s Medical Advisory Board and Stephen Kaufman, M.D. also a member of The Eye-Bank’s Medical Advisory Board.

Special thanks go to two guest faculty for their expertise and collaboration on Cornea Fellow Day: George Rosenwasser, M.D., Central Pennsylvania Eye Institute, and Christopher Sales, M.D., Weill Cornell Medical College.

Ms. Dahl provided an overview of the importance of eye banking in providing quality, donor eye tissue and Mudassir Razvi, The Eye-Bank’s Tissue Processing Manager delivered a presentation on preparing corneas for DMEK surgeries.
Cornea Recipient Can Now Pursue a Career as a Police Officer

M. Kim Oliver

Twenty-four-year-old Yoel Camacho is looking forward to a career as a New York City police officer. He feels particularly grateful because it was only a couple years ago that he did not expect this dream of protecting and serving fellow New Yorkers to become a reality because he was legally blind.

Originally from the Dominican Republic, Yoel migrated with his family to the United States when he was eight years old. He says for as long as he can remember, he has always had trouble with his eyesight and this led to challenges at school, although his teachers were very understanding and supportive. Yoel’s eyesight was such that he did not recognize his friends as he passed them in the school’s corridors because he could not see their faces. Limited eyesight and a concern about dust getting into his eyes and causing infection also prevented this avid baseball fan from participating in sports.

When Yoel was 15 years old he was diagnosed with keratoconus, a progressive eye disease that causes the cornea, the clear outer covering of the eye, to become cone shaped and if left untreated, can eventually lead to blindness. The disease caused him to experience severe sensitivity to light and his doctor prescribed hard contact lenses, a common treatment for certain stages of keratoconus. However, two years later as the disease progressed and his eyesight worsened, he could no longer tolerate the hard lenses and was referred to Gerald Zaidman, M.D., ophthalmologist and corneal surgeon, at Westchester Medical Center who prescribed a cornea transplant for his left eye which was in a worse state than the right.

According to Yoel, he was excited to have the surgery and see the world around him in a new and better way. Dr. Zaidman performed the cornea transplant at Westchester Medical Center with donor tissue provided by The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration. The result was a great improvement in Yoel’s eyesight. Shortly after the transplant, Yoel explains that he could see the letters on the eye chart, an impossible task before the surgery, and best of all, he could now see his friends’ faces.

Four years after the transplant in his left eye, Yoel received a successful cornea transplant in his right eye, and he ecstatically exclaimed, “The world is wonderful!” After each transplant had healed, Lask surgery was performed resulting in 20/20 vision on Yoel’s right eye and 20/30 in his left eye, without the use of glasses. With his restored eyesight, Yoel sat and passed the entrance exam for the New York City Police Department, a significant step in the pursuit of his chosen career of law enforcement. Currently, he is studying Criminal Justice at Monroe College in Yonkers. He would not have been able to embark on this professional path without the corneal transplants, made possible thanks to eye donation. Yoel is grateful to his surgeon, Dr. Zaidman and especially his donors whose generosity allowed him to have restored eyesight and a much enhanced life. He sympathizes with his donors’ family for the loss they suffered and is deeply grateful for the gift of sight given to him. As a police officer, he will be in a position to honor his donors by serving and protecting others in the community.

You can say “yes” to donation when you sign-up in the Donate Life Registry at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), register to vote or visit us online at www.eyedonation.org and click on the Donate Life Logo. Enroll in the NYS Donate Life Registry today and See What Your Eyes Can Do for Others. 

Young Ambassador Provides Artwork

Eleven-year-old cornea transplant recipient, Leibinson Perez Novas, is The Eye-Bank’s Young Ambassador who created artwork for our 2016 Thanksgiving card.

It was only a year ago that the sixth grader struggled with his eyesight. He had difficulty with his favorite subject in school, Math, and could not fully participate in physical education classes. A cornea transplant performed by ophthalmologist and corneal surgeon, Gerald Zaidman, M.D., at Westchester Medical Center restored Leibinson’s eyesight. The drawing on this year’s card reflects his enjoyment of being able to play outdoors and celebrate his own special meaning of Thanksgiving with family and friends.

Leibinson’s newfound eyesight would not have been possible without the generosity of our eye donors and financial contributors. Their efforts have allowed The Eye-Bank to offer significant hope and indeed restored eyesight to thousands who need a cornea transplant to see. To those who help us continue our mission of sight restoration, we say a profound “Thank you.” We appreciate your valuable support and look forward to our continued collaboration.
Throughout 2016, The Eye-Bank created greater awareness about the importance of eye, organ and tissue donation through a variety of community outreach efforts.

In conjunction with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD), we partnered with the New York League of Women Voters in a year-long project titled, Every Vote Counts, Every Donor Counts!, working to educate New Yorkers about the need to be registered to vote, and at the same time, providing information about enrollment in the New York State Donate Life Registry with a view to increasing the donor designation. New York State is the only state that offers the opportunity to enroll to be a donor at the same time one can register to vote.

In addition, The Eye-Bank participated in National Voter Registration Day on September 27 and offered opportunities to sign up in the Donate Life Registry. Tabling events were conducted at colleges, churches, small businesses and cultural institutions in Brooklyn and Manhattan. The voter registration campaign provided The Eye-Bank and the other organizations with a viable avenue to reach thousands of New Yorkers with the donation message and a call to action.

On October 6, The Eye-Bank joined forces with organizations across the state to participate in the second annual Organ Donor Enrollment Day. Individuals and state teams dedicated the day to signing up as many New Yorkers as possible in the Donate Life Registry. The Eye-Bank alone staffed enrollment tables at Westchester Community College, Elmhurst Hospital Center, Staten Island University North Hospital, and at three Walgreens pharmacy locations, two in Brooklyn and one in Manhattan. The event was a great success with over 4,000 new enrollees being added to the Registry.

Special thanks go to Eye-Bank volunteers and staff who helped to make our 2016 outreach efforts successful. To get involved in community outreach opportunities with The Eye-Bank, please call 212-742-9000 ext. 115 or visit www.eyedonation.org/public-education.html.

Medical Advisory Board Member is Named to EBAA Leadership Program for Physicians

The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration is pleased to announce that Medical Advisory Board Member Maayan Keshet, M.D. has been selected to participate in the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) 2017 Young Physician Leadership Program which will be conducted in Atlanta, GA on February 25–26.

The EBAA program for young physicians, first offered in 2011, was created to promote individual professional growth and leadership development; increase collaboration between cornea surgeons and the eye banking community; and expand interest among physicians in taking on leadership roles within the eye banking field and the EBAA. This is the third time the program has been offered.

Dr. Keshet, an ophthalmology associate at Fromer Eye Centers in New York City, is a highly-skilled specialist in cornea and refractive surgery and is attending surgeon at St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan.

She has served as an elected member of The Eye-Bank’s Medical Advisory Board since 2013 and has been a significant contributor toward our Eye-Bank’s mission of providing safe, quality tissue for ophthalmic surgeries.

The Eye-Bank’s Medical Director, Michelle Rhee, M.D., also will be in attendance at the EBAA’s Physician Leadership Program in February as faculty. Dr. Rhee previously participated in the program when it was conducted in 2015.
New Videos Feature Donor Family Members

New videos featuring several of The Eye-Bank’s donor families can be viewed on The Eye-Bank’s Web site and Facebook page. Produced in-house at The Eye-Bank, the poignant stories shared by a donor mother, husband and sister tell of their loved ones’ selfless gift of eye donation. Donor mother, Andrea Nordquist, has been a long-time volunteer with The Eye-Bank. A member of The Eye-Bank Board of Directors, Andrea helped establish the Young Ambassador Scholarship in memory of her son, Christopher, to increase awareness about donation in the wider community. Michael Rinaldi shares the story of his wife’s donation. An Army Veteran and resident of Staten Island, Michael is an active volunteer with The Eye-Bank and participated in our 2016 Legislative Education Day in Albany. The most recently produced video, which is soon-to-be released, features Jessica Abanilla who shares the moving story of her sister’s gift of eye donation. Previously, Jessica appeared in The Eye-Bank’s Ad Campaign, Eye Am So Proud, encouraging New Yorkers to support donation.


College Students Can Offset Costs with The Eye-Bank Scholarship

Prepare now and apply for The Eye-Bank’s Young Ambassador Scholarship established in memory of Christopher Nordquist who was only two years old when he died and gave the beautiful gift of sight to two people. The purpose of the scholarship is to create greater awareness about the importance of eye, organ and tissue donation.

To be eligible for the $1,000 scholarship, applicants must be under the age of 25, be enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college and reside within The Eye-Bank’s service area of New York City, Long Island or the Lower Hudson Valley. Students must conduct a project that promotes eye, organ and tissue donation to an audience in the community.

Past Young Ambassador Scholarship winners have created videos, given presentations at schools and hospitals, reached out through their place of worship and community groups and used social media to enhance projects.

To apply for the scholarship, please visit The Eye-Bank’s website at www.eyedonation.org/scholarship. Your application must be postmarked by May 15, 2017. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. If you have any questions or need promotional materials such as brochures and pens, please call 212-742-9000 ext. 115.

Life of Eye-Bank Founder Chronciled by His Son

Continued from page 1

Since Dr. Paton’s incredible vision paired with the brilliant organizational skill of Aida Breckinridge succeeded in establishing The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have had their sight restored thanks to eye donation and cornea transplantation. It is with deep gratitude that we thank David Paton, M.D. for giving us the beautifully written story of how this miracle happened and continues to impact lives today.

“This is a fascinating history of a uniquely versatile gentleman and of a bygone world in which he operated so well. It is splendid, a tour de force. I loved it and couldn’t put it down,” writes Morton F. Goldberg, M.D., Director Emeritus, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The 290-page annotated biography is available at Amazon.com. Or for more information, please feel free to contact The Eye-Bank at eyedonation.org.
The Eye-Bank’s Most Valuable Players: People Who Help Make a Difference

We are pleased to shine the spotlight on Christina Dugan, RN, organ donation coordinator at NYU Langone Medical Center as an Eye-Bank MVP. Ms. Dugan actively seeks opportunities to promote eye, organ and tissue donation through education, tabling and various community outreach efforts. In 2016, Ms. Dugan facilitated four separate tabling events which resulted in large numbers of New Yorkers signing up as potential donors in the New York State Donate Life Registry. Her commitment to the donation process was also demonstrated in her initiating and organizing two hospital-wide in-service workshops for nurses. These lectures, featuring donor families, provided hospital staff with greater in-depth knowledge about donation and the vital part they play as healthcare professionals. Ms. Dugan’s community outreach efforts are a testament to her commitment to the donation cause. In April 2016 during Donate Life Month, she coordinated a flag raising ceremony and reception to honor donors and their families. She also gathered a group of NYU volunteers, and attended a taping of Good Morning America to promote eye, organ and tissue donation. In addition, Ms. Dugan was featured on Sirius Radio Nurse Practitioner where she spoke on the subject of donation.

The Eye-Bank applauds Christina Dugan’s tremendous efforts to create greater awareness about donation, both among the staff at NYU Langone Medical Center and in the community at large. We appreciate all that you do and thank you!

Brian Curtin, M.D. is Remembered

The Eye-Bank remembers Brian J. Curtin, M.D. who passed away on September 17, 2016 at the age of 95. Dr. Curtin, an ophthalmologist and corneal surgeon, served on The Eye-Bank’s Board of Directors from 1978 to 1981 and subsequently on The Eye-Bank’s Medical Advisory Board from 1981 until he retired from the Board in 1990. He was presented with an Eye-Bank resolution at the time by former Board President Richard Salzer citing Dr. Curtin’s wise counsel and tireless dedication to the cause of sight restoration.

A 1945 graduate of New York University Medical School, Dr. Curtin served in the United States Navy as ship surgeon from 1946 to 1948. In the ensuing years, his illustrious career included serving as Surgeon Director and then Medical Director at Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital as well as associate professor of ophthalmology at The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University.

He was widely recognized in the field of ophthalmology for his contributions to the treatment of myopia and for authoring the 1985 textbook, The Myopias: Basic Science and Clinical Management.

We are sincerely grateful to Dr. Curtin’s family for requesting that memorial gifts in his honor be made to The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration and our sight saving mission.

Dr. Curtin (L) receives recognition in 1990 from Eye-Bank’s former President, Richard, Salzer

Honor/Memorial Gifts from May 31, 2016 to November 30, 2016

Memorial and honor gifts are given to recognize loved ones or to mark a special occasion. To make a gift in honor or memory of someone, please use the enclosed envelope, visit www.eyedonation.org/give or contact The Eye-Bank’s Development Department at (212) 742-9000.
Golfers Enjoy 7th Annual Swing for Sight

Golfers enjoyed a great day of play with sunny skies and cool breezes on September 12, 2016, at our Swing for Sight golf outing held at the Robert Trent Jones-designed course at New York’s Tuxedo Club. Special thanks go to Benefit Committee co-chairs, David Haight, M.D. and Laurence Sperber, M.D., both members of our Medical Advisory Board, to the Benefit Committee, and all who gave their support. The successful event helped raise funds for our sight restoring efforts.

At the end of a challenging 18 holes, two teams emerged as winners. Low Gross was secured by team Eddie Fabian, Daniel Fabian, Joseph Fabian and Billy Phillips with team Lynda Hartman, Joshua Strugatz, Joe Papo, and Brian McCaffrey clinching second place. First place Low Net was won by Patricia Dahl, David Goodnight, Jacob Jamron and Jonathan Satovsky, while team David Haight, Nick Gregory, Renee Richards and Curtis Stewart came in a close second. Gregory is a popular meteorologist with WNYW (FOX 5) and during the weather report that night, mentioned Swing for Sight and the terrific weather players enjoyed.

Golfers also competed in several hole-in-one competitions, which carried a top prize of $25,000. Individual prizes were also given for: Closest to the Pin, Jonathan Satovsky; Longest Drive, Brian Mahoney and Patty Mastellone; while the Chipping Contest was won by Joseph Fabian. Congratulations to all who triumphed! The raffle contest offered golfers additional prizes including: one round of golf from each of the following golf clubs, Centennial, Royce Brook and Hollow Brook; a gift certificate to Veselka Restaurant and two VIP tickets to CBS The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.

All players had a terrific day of golf and enjoyed a lovely dinner after the tournament. Thanks to all who participated and made Swing for Sight a success!
Congratulations to Eye-Bank Medical Advisory Board Member, Himani Goyal, M.D., on the birth of her son, Kendi Ayushmaan Venkataraman, who was born on November 18, 2016 and weighed 7lbs, 15oz. The name “Kendi” is from the Meru region in Kenya and means “one who is loved.” His 19-month-old sister, Tatiana, certainly proves this by asking for him every morning and insisting on giving him a kiss every night. Dad, Hemanth, and Mom are thrilled with the new addition to their family.

Loryn Galvan has been promoted to Family Support Supervisor to assist with recruiting and training as well as ensuring effective communications between Family Support Coordinators and management. Loryn graduated with a B.A. in Sociology from Rutgers University and holds a Master of Arts degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Noël Mick, Director of Communications at The Eye-Bank, was elected to a second term on the Eye Bank Association of America’s (EBAA) Board of Directors in the office of secretary. The elections conducted by the EBAA’s House of Delegates took place at the association’s annual meeting held in June 2016 in St. Louis, MO. Terms on the EBAA Board are two years. The EBAA, headquartered in Washington, DC, sets medical standards and provides accreditation for member eye banks nationwide.

Marilyn Kim Oliver, joined other professionals in the field of eye, organ and tissue donation at the Donate Life America annual meeting held in Las Vegas from October 25–27, 2016. The theme of the meeting was “Maximizing the Gift: A High Stakes Opportunity,” and presentations covered a wide range of subjects including: volunteer recruitment and management, social media outreach, and developing culturally specific information.

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