

VISION



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Contact Us
Learn more about charitable giving options or how to become our partner in sight restoration by calling (312) 469-5516 or visiting eversightvision.org/illinois

Cover story:
Photos by Dimitre Photography

Executive Director’s perspective



Since 1947, Eversight Illinois has worked alongside surgeons and researchers, tirelessly pursuing new treatments and cures that may one day eliminate preventable blindness.

In this issue of Vision, we celebrate our platinum anniversary with a retrospective of the incredible advancements made in sight restoration at Eversight Illinois. You’ll also read about today’s exciting, innovative technologies and medical practices that are transforming the future of transplantation and vision care—from 3-D microscope imaging to tiny devices allowing tissue to be delivered safely in even the most extreme climates around the world.

These innovations bring promise to many as we continue to explore new advancements in our quest to help everyone suffering from preventable blindness. In addition, throughout our rich history we have never forgotten those who make donation happen. We honor the donors and donor families who generously make the gift of sight possible. Our cover story explores how the lives of two strangers became connected through a selfless decision to help someone else in need.

Seventy years ago, we accepted the responsibility to provide the gift of sight to as many individuals as possible, and we will not stop until all people have the chance to have a life full of sight.

Diane Hollingsworth
Eversight Illinois Executive Director

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Five ways Eversight is changing the future of sight



Eversight Illinois

Platinum anniversary

Eversight Illinois is proud to celebrate 70 years of restoring sight and preventing blindness in our community, made possible by people like you who believe in our mission. Learn how our programs and contributors are changing lives now and into the future.

Featured contributors bring our mission to life



Marcia Dillon, a cornea recipient, wants everyone to have a second chance for sight.

Marcia helps those in need

As a huge fan of The Beatles growing up, it was an unforgettable moment for Marcia to see Paul McCartney perform in 2011. It was one of the best days of her life, but her high spirits were quickly dashed when the very next day she woke up unable to see out of one eye because of post-cataract surgery complications. Marcia was suddenly legally blind, but she received a sight-restoring cornea transplant thanks to a selfless donor. Today, she’s an avid Eversight Illinois supporter because she knows how devastating it is for someone to lose their sight. “I knew the rest of the world needed this type of help,” Marcia said.



Eileen Howard-Weinberg, pictured with husband Marshall, is essential to the success of the biggest Eversight Illinois fundraiser every year.

Eileen supports the community

Eileen has been an Eversight Illinois supporter and event attendee for more than a decade. Her relationship with the organization blossomed when she became co-chair of our Gift of Sight Gala three years ago. Eileen infused the event with creativity and style, elevating the gala’s distinction and success. Outside of the event, she is passionate about the organization’s contributions to ocular research initiatives. “I was recruited to support the gala and saw firsthand the amazing work of the eye bank,” Eileen said. “I was so impressed that I decided to make a bequest to Eversight Illinois.”

Our programs

Gift of Sight

Provides charitable services to help patients with limited income or insurance coverage receive a transplant

Gift of Hope

Supports critical research into the treatment and prevention of blinding eye diseases

Gift of Innovation

Improves patient outcomes by integrating state-of-the-art technology and laboratory equipment

Gift of Knowledge

Educates communities and professionals about the importance of eye, organ and tissue donation

Supporting Eversight Illinois is easy with our many giving options

Charitable contributions are tax-deductible and can be made in honor or memory of someone special in your life.



Use the enclosed contribution envelope



Make a gift by phone, call (312) 469-5516



Donate online at eversightvision.org/illinois



Make a planned gift or bequest



Make your gift go further—check with your employer for matching-gift opportunities

70 Years

Eversight Illinois

Eversight Illinois is celebrating our 70th anniversary with a look back at the many people whose deep commitment to our mission transformed donation and transplantation as we know it today.

1947

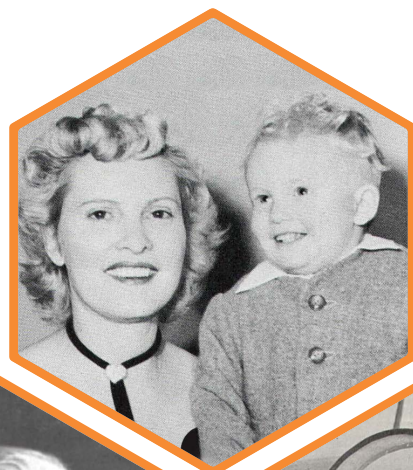
Originally named the Illinois Eye-Bank, the organization was the fourth eye bank in the United States when it was established at Cook County Hospital as a joint project between the Chicago Ophthalmological Society and the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness.

1950s

During the first year 25 eyes were donated, and only four were used for transplants in Chicago. But as the life-changing power of restored sight became more widely known, communities began embracing the idea of eye donation and transplantation.

1969

Dr. Maurice Rabb, a Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, became the first Illinois Eye-Bank Medical Director. Dr. Rabb was known internationally for his pioneering work in corneal and retinal vascular diseases.



Restoring sight

1,000+ donations



TODAY

Eversight Illinois is a leader in the eye banking community. Led by Medical Directors Catherine Crockett, M.D., Gregory Halperin, M.D., Joel Sugar, M.D., and Elmer Tu, M.D., the organization continues to restore sight for nearly 3,000 people every year.

Dr. Joel Sugar received the Founder's Award, the eye bank's highest honor, for his two decades of dedication and personal commitment to the mission of the Illinois Eye-Bank. At the same time, 2,357 eye tissues were donated for transplant and research—a stark contrast to the 25 in 1947.

By this time, the Illinois Eye-Bank averaged more than 1,000 eye donations a year. Surgeries could be scheduled in advance, and the cornea transplant waiting list was virtually eliminated thanks to the growing support for eye donation.

1990s

2005

Eversight

20/20s

Eye banks work together



2015

Midwest Eye-Banks changed its name to Eversight and the Illinois Eye-Bank became Eversight Illinois, re-energizing its mission and inspiring more people to support the organization's commitment to providing the gift of sight now and into the future.

1996

The BroMenn-Watson Gailey Eye-Bank in Bloomington joined the Illinois Eye-Bank, allowing the organization to serve both northern and central Illinois. And Midwest Eye-Banks was heavily involved with funding preliminary research into the causes and cures of blinding eye diseases.

1985

The Illinois Eye-Bank and the Michigan Eye-Bank took the bold step of merging together and becoming Midwest Eye-Banks. Together, they provided more comprehensive and efficient care to both communities, their surgeons and patients.

1970s

This decade brought numerous advances in transplant technology. Breakthroughs in cornea storage media had a major impact on the availability of corneas for transplantation, because eye tissue could be preserved for several days rather than just a few hours.

1956

The Illinois Eye-Bank received more than 100 eye donations, and the organization quickly became a 24/7 operation, hiring its first full-time employee and placing volunteers on call to deliver tissue.

1950s

Early leadership was a collaborative effort between prominent ophthalmologists, including Dr. William F. Hughes, one of the founding fathers of eye banking, and Dr. Robert Fitzgerald.



1940s

Thanking Katie



Donor mom and recipient connect through the healing power of donation and transplantation

Nov. 7, 2016 was a day September Vaudrey anticipated for more than eight years. She was finally going to meet the person who received the gift of sight from her daughter, Katie.

Katie passed away unexpectedly in 2008, and though she was only 19 years old, she experienced more joy, love and laughter than most people get in a lifetime. She was an accomplished artist who aspired to become a professional painter. Beyond her artistic endeavors, Katie dreamed of being a wife and mother one day.

“The week before her passing, she said, ‘Mom, I want to have six children,’” September said. “This completely reflects Katie’s highest priorities in life: family and people. She was all about loving people.”

This love for others had inspired her to join the donor registry several years earlier. Katie’s decision allowed her to touch the lives of eight people through eye, organ and tissue donation, including two cornea recipients in Illinois.

When September learned of this outcome, she jumped at the chance to participate in the Eversight Illinois correspondence program and wrote Katie’s recipients a heartfelt letter.

“Katie saw beauty in all its imperfect forms through those beautiful eyes of hers. To know that her corneas are helping you see the world more clearly has brought me much joy over the years.”



Evelin Vazquez feared for her sight because of a progressive eye disease, but a cornea transplant allowed her to follow her dreams.

The letter made its way to Evelin Vazquez, who had always wondered about the person to whom she owed her renewed sight. In her reply Evelin wrote:

“Not a day goes by that I don’t think about my donor and give thanks. Now I know I can say THANK YOU KATIE.”

Evelin’s struggle with corneal blindness began 10 years earlier. At just 20 years old, Evelin endured progressive vision loss and a series of misdiagnoses before finally receiving an explanation for her problems: keratoconus.

“I didn’t know if I would go completely blind,” Evelin said. “I asked my doctor if I would ever get to see the simple things like colorful flowers or my family’s faces. I didn’t know if my eye disease would end my dreams.”

Fortunately, Evelin regained hope when she learned a cornea transplant could restore her sight. Now, eight years after her surgery, Evelin has a successful career in the medical field and can enjoy all of life’s finest details—like her 5-year-old son’s smile.



Donor mother September Vaudrey displays a painting by her daughter, Katie.

Evelin’s gratitude motivated her to do more than just write to September. It inspired her to set up a meeting.

So, during the first week of November, Evelin and September finally had the chance to embrace and share their interconnected stories at Eversight Illinois in Chicago.

As September hugged Evelin for the first time, she said, “Thank you so much for being willing to meet me. It means so much.”

Evelin simply replied, *“No, thank Katie.”*

Eversight Illinois helps facilitate correspondence between recipients and donor families. If you are interested in writing to a donor family or recipient, contact Brittany Wright, Community Relations Liaison, at bwright@eversightvision.org.

Living with keratoconus



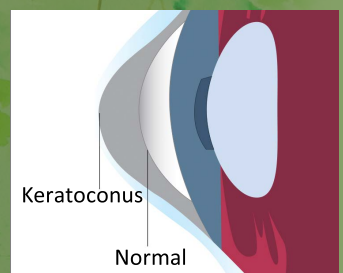
Dr. Majmudar

Special thanks to Parag A. Majmudar, M.D., President and Chief Medical Officer of Chicago Cornea Consultants, Ltd., for providing information about keratoconus and the innovative corneal cross-linking treatment.

Every year thousands of people are diagnosed with an eye condition called keratoconus. The disorder is a common cause of corneal blindness in which the cornea progressively thins and steepens into a cone shape. The cornea acts as a window and allows light to pass through to the retina to project a clear image to the brain. In keratoconus, however, the abnormal shape of the cornea results in a distorted image.

Symptoms & treatments

As the condition worsens, patients often experience a variety of symptoms which interfere with their visual acuity and ability to complete daily tasks, jobs or other responsibilities. Common symptoms may include:



- Increased light sensitivity
- Difficulty driving at night
- Eye strain, headaches
- Seeing halos around lights and eye pain

Transplants have provided the gift of sight to countless patients with keratoconus, but new innovations offer a variety of other options. One of these therapies, which has become a first-line treatment for keratoconus all over the world, is called corneal cross-linking (CXL).

CXL employs ultraviolet light and a photosensitizer to increase corneal strength and halt the advancement of the bulging caused by keratoconus. This therapy was previously only recommended for progressive cases, but CXL is now being used to preserve corneal shape and function for both young patients and those whose conditions could possibly worsen.

Similar to cornea transplants, CXL is an outpatient procedure and takes about 60–90 minutes. Patients typically recover their baseline visual acuity within 48–72 hours.

The future of CXL

As CXL continues growing in popularity, surgeons anticipate the procedure will be offered to every child and adult at the first onset of keratoconus. With increased education about CXL it might even be possible to change the keratoconus paradigm from a reactive treatment (i.e. performing a transplant) to a proactive one.

PARTNERS IN VISION

Surgeons flourish in eye banking leadership program



Dr. Farooq



Dr. Tannan

Dr. Tannan said. “It was a great forum for less experienced physicians like myself to gain true insight and guidance from those who have been working tirelessly to advance the goals of eye banking, corneal transplantation and, above all, patient care.”

Eversight Illinois connects with cornea surgeons early in their careers and provides opportunities for them to learn about eye banking practices, because fostering relationships with talented, caring physicians is critical to our mission.

The Eye Bank Association of America’s 2017 Physician Leadership program is one such opportunity. Eversight Illinois nominated corneal surgeons Dr. Asim Farooq and Dr. Anjali Tannan to take part in this year’s program designed to promote their professional growth and leadership in the eye banking community.

“It was an eye-opening experience and I learned a great deal,”

Participants completed several sessions throughout the program, including one entitled “Follow the Cornea,” which explores eye banking from donation to the moment tissue is delivered for surgery.

To assist Dr. Tannan and Dr. Farooq in fulfilling their requirements for “Follow the Cornea,” Eversight Illinois hosted each for a first-hand introduction to our operations. Chemika Howard, Operations Supervisor of Clinical Recovery, explained how Eversight Illinois reaches out to donor families and recovers their loved ones’ tissues. And Dalene Youngblood, Lab Supervisor, demonstrated how corneas are packaged and shipped to surgeons across the United States and the world.

“Surgeons are one of our most important constituents,” said Mary Peete, Eversight Illinois Professional Relations Liaison, “and this kind of program draws back the curtain for young surgeons on the intricate details that make transplantation possible. Because of that added knowledge, Dr. Tannan and Dr. Farooq are both better equipped to treat their patients and restore people’s sight.”



Chemika Howard (right), Eversight Illinois Operations Supervisor of Clinical Recovery, shows Dr. Asim Farooq a variety of technician recovery tools.

Eversight Illinois welcomes new corneal surgeon to Carle Foundation Hospital



Dr. Zafar

Illinois is fortunate to have many highly skilled and passionate surgeons dedicated to serving the state’s residents battling corneal blindness. In August 2016, Dr. Abu-Bakar Zafar joined Carle Foundation Hospital, allowing patients in Urbana who previously had to drive hours for a cornea transplant to now receive medical care close to home.

driving long distances a big challenge.

Fortunately for Linda, and others like her, she didn’t have to go far for exceptional care.

Dr. Zafar completed his fellowship in cornea and refractive surgery at Pepose Vision Institute and Barnes-Jewish Hospital and has a background of diverse experiences that keep him on the cutting edge of his field.

Dr. Zafar has already become an asset to Carle, and Eversight Illinois looks forward to continuing to work with him. As for Linda, she’s thrilled with her renewed vision and can’t wait to get back to doing the things she loves.



Black & White Night for Sight

Eversight Illinois Night for Sight co-chairs Karen Magers and Leanna Bordner, and the event committee, are pleased to invite you to Black & White Night for Sight on May 4 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Bloomington.

Enjoy an elegant evening of cuisine and cocktails while donning your favorite black and white attire. The event, which raises funds for Eversight Illinois and our charitable programs, also includes live auction prizes, a mystery wine pull, 50/50 raffle and much more!

At the heart of the celebration, Eversight Illinois is honoring donor parents Jim and Kelly Collins and Keri Schmidt and Jeff Kohlmeier, whose sons gave the ultimate gift—the gift of sight.

Jim and Kelly lost Michael, their 22-year-old son, three years ago following a tragic car accident. Michael became an eye donor and gave two people the gift of sight, and he continues to have a lasting impact on those in need through The Michael Collins Foundation. The Foundation, created by his parents to honor their son and support charitable causes that were close to his heart, has touched countless lives and inspired 20,000 people on social media to repay good deeds in honor of Michael.

The event will also honor Keri and Jeff whose son, Casey, died in 2013 after being hit by a drunk driver. Casey was a young police officer committed to serving his community. This dedication to helping others continued after his passing, as Casey was a cornea donor who gave sight to two recipients. Inspired by Casey’s donation, Keri became a public speaker to raise awareness about the dangers of drunken driving and the importance of registering as an eye, organ and tissue donor.

Our honorees represent a special community of individuals and families who give selflessly so that others may see a bright future. Please help us recognize these incredible people and the impact they have made on donation and transplantation.



Parents of cornea donors Casey Kohlmeier (left) and Michael Collins will be honored at Black & White Night for Sight.



Black & White Night for Sight is a wonderful evening of food and drinks with friends coming together to support Eversight Illinois.

70th Anniversary Celebration

Where has the time gone? We’re celebrating 70 years of service to our community and honoring those who have been changed by corneal transplantation and research at our 70th Anniversary Celebration.

SAVE THE DATE • THE PENINSULA CHICAGO • WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017 • 6 P.M.–10 P.M.

INNOVATION

“We have to continue evolving and improving our treatments and can never stop at what we have.”

Dr. Shahzad Mian, University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center corneal surgeon and Eversight Medical Director

Dr. Mian’s words couldn’t ring more true. What we know today about treating blindness was made possible by the people before us who believed there was a better way. At the core of our mission, Eversight is dedicated to advancing new treatments through technology, partnerships and clinical practices that will make sight restoration better than ever before.

Changing climate

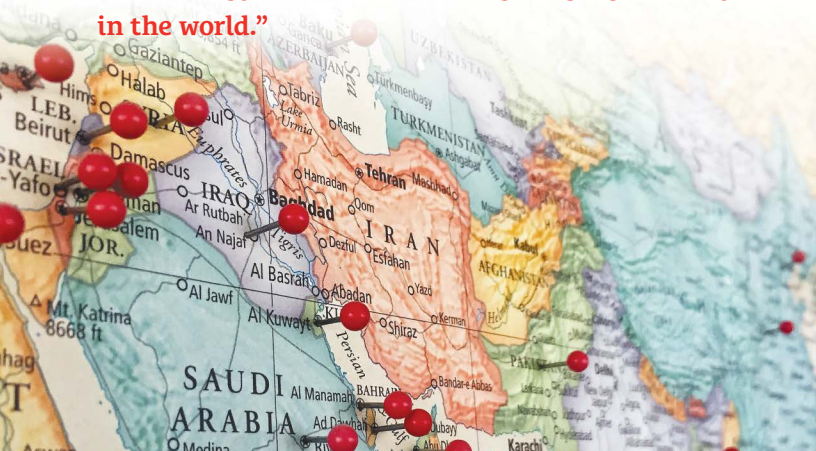
Eversight provides tissue for more than 2,500 transplant patients outside the United States every year, and with each delivery there are many logistical challenges to overcome, particularly climate. International shipments are often exposed to extreme temperature fluctuations, from near-zero conditions in the United States to desert regions like Abu Dhabi where the temperature can average nearly 100 degrees Fahrenheit. But during this long journey, the packaging must maintain a stable internal environment to keep the tissue safe.

One tiny device, called an electronic data logger, is changing the way Eversight delivers tissue abroad. The logger, no larger than a USB drive, is placed inside the tissue cooler and collects temperature data throughout the shipping process. Once the package arrives at its destination, a surgeon can view the recorded data and verify safe shipping conditions.



Early results from the device led Eversight to adopt new packaging that can maintain a constant internal temperature for 72 hours in any climate—an important factor when sending tissue thousands of miles around the globe.

“The data logger has been an incredible tool for upholding the highest standards in safety and quality of the tissue we provide for transplants,” said Erik Hellier, Director of International Clinical Services. “Technology like this aids us in giving sight to anyone in the world.”



Excellence in action

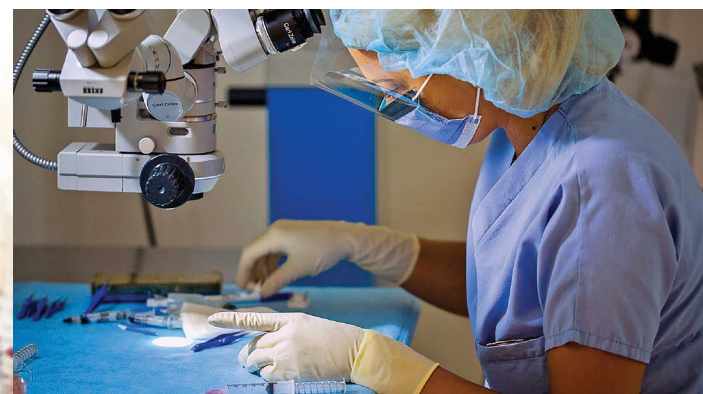
Two years of hard work paid off for Lauren Johnson, Eversight Tissue Processing Services Manager, and Dr. Parag Majmudar of Chicago Cornea Consultants, after investigating parameters affecting endothelial cell health for a tissue-staining procedure popular with both surgeons and eye banks.

Using grant funding provided by the Eye Bank Association of America, the pair discovered the optimal time to stain the cornea with trypan blue dye, a process commonly used to help surgeons visualize tissue during surgery.

The cornea is vulnerable to damage if the dye is applied too long, especially for procedures like DMEK in which the tissue is no thicker than a human hair. If not dyed long enough, surgeons may have difficulty positioning the tissue properly. Both factors can increase the incidence of transplant complications and even rejection.

“Finding the right balance to satisfy surgeon needs during the procedure, as well as promote graft adherence and favorable patient results, was paramount in this study,” Johnson said. “We look forward to sharing our results with the greater eye banking community to ensure the best outcomes for all cornea transplant patients.”

Johnson and Dr. Majmudar’s research was recently published in *Cornea*, the leading peer-reviewed ophthalmology journal, and presented at the EBAA’s Annual Scientific Symposium.

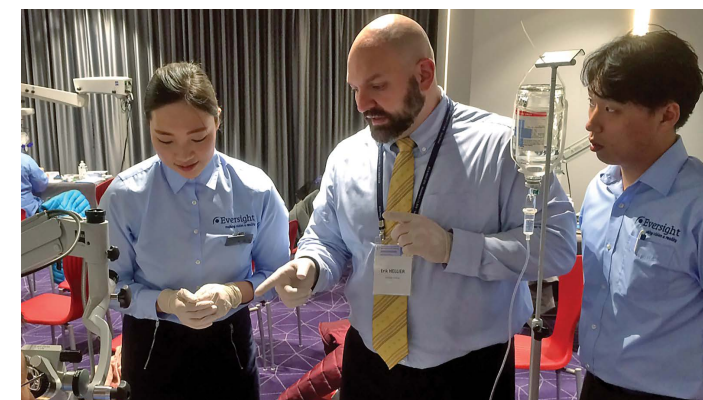


Breaking boundaries

In many parts of the world, corneal transplantation is limited by a lack of foundational and advanced clinical training. Eversight is one of the first organizations to provide training to physicians and healthcare professionals in regions most affected by preventable blindness.

In December, Eversight partnered with a team of renowned corneal surgeons to remove these barriers and train physicians from across Asia on the latest techniques in corneal transplantation. During the Asia Cornea Society Scientific Conference in Seoul, South Korea, Eversight sponsored a training wet lab and provided donor tissue for four successful live cornea transplant surgeries that were streamed to the more than 200 conference attendees.

“It’s an incredible privilege for Eversight to work with such innovative leaders in the field of corneal transplantation,” said Collin Ross, Eversight International Executive Director. “We’re working together to share our skills and expertise, to help train physicians dedicated to restoring sight.”

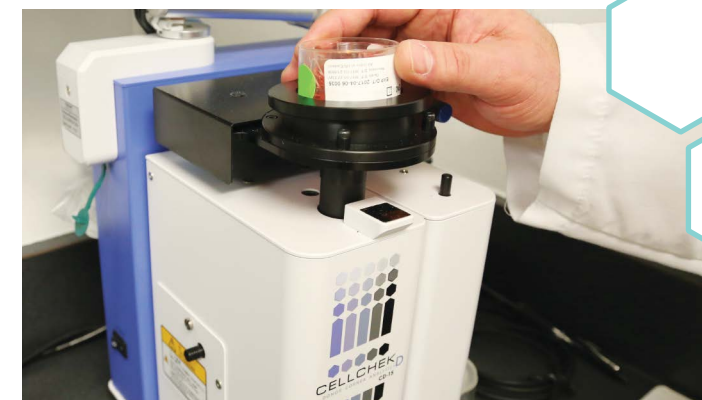


A new look

Before any cornea is made available for transplant or research it must undergo a stringent evaluation process at the hands of specially trained technicians using the latest microscope technology. Now, Eversight is taking a whole new look at tissue evaluation with the CellChek D+ microscope, recently integrated into each of our laboratories.

The CellChek D+ produces images with detail never seen before by earlier technology. Eversight technicians can now see corneas in 3-D and make more accurate evaluations that help prevent transplant complications. The microscopes have the capability to do much more—functions that will be further explored in the coming months.

“The CellChek D+ is an important investment in the quality of services and patient safety,” said Michael O’Keefe, Eversight Chief Clinical Officer. “We’re excited to find more ways this technology can advance our eye banking practices.”



Innovations Task Force

Improvements in cornea transplant surgery and vision therapies are developing at an incredible rate, creating new opportunities for Eversight to grow our services. To keep pace and anticipate emerging medical innovations, Eversight formed the Innovations Task Force, an internal team comprised of representatives from key departments including clinical operations, recovery, processing, research, quality and client services, with guidance from members of our Medical Advisory Committee.

One exciting opportunity identified early on by the Task Force was the need for autologous serum eye drops for physicians treating dry eye disease. The drops, developed using a patient’s

own blood, are a novel therapy for a syndrome that can lead to ulcers and vision loss if left untreated.

“In eye banking, and ophthalmology as a whole, we’re seeing so many exciting discoveries with great promise in treating vision loss,” said David Bosch, Eversight Chief Marketing Officer. “Our Innovations Task Force allows us to stay on top of emerging procedures, processes and therapies important to researchers, surgeons and their patients.”

2016: See our impact



"I am so grateful for my cornea donor, as she gave me the chance to see my first granddaughter clearly. I can't put into words how amazing this gift is."

— Jason Murphy,
cornea recipient

2,388

Illinois residents gave the gift of sight

2,461

People received a second chance for sight through corneal transplantation with the help of Eversight Illinois

1,261

People donated for research and education to advance eye banking practices and treatments for blinding eye diseases

Mark your calendars!

Black and White Night for Sight

Thursday, May 4, 2016

6–9:30 p.m.

DoubleTree Hilton Hotel
Bloomington, IL

70th Anniversary Celebration

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

6–10 p.m.

The Peninsula Chicago
Chicago, IL

Keep up with our latest events on
social media

 facebook.com/eversightillinois

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