



The Path to Sight

“Although the passing of my daughter was extremely devastating, I realized her wishes of helping someone else through the precious gift of sight had such a special meaning... helping not one, but two people see the world through her very eyes.”

—Janine Funk, Mother of Donor

Your Path to Sight

Congratulations on Your Newfound Sight!

You are the recipient of a wonderful gift generously made possible by a cornea donor who wanted to provide the gift of sight. Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research serves as a steward of this gift by carefully recovering and preparing tissue for ocular surgery and distributing those tissues to surgeons and their patients around the world.

Founded in 1973, Lions Eye Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving visual outcomes and quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired. Through our pursuit to ease cornea transplantation and improve clinical outcomes, we have become the largest nonprofit eye bank and research center in the world.

Here are two ways that you can get involved with Lions Eye Institute:

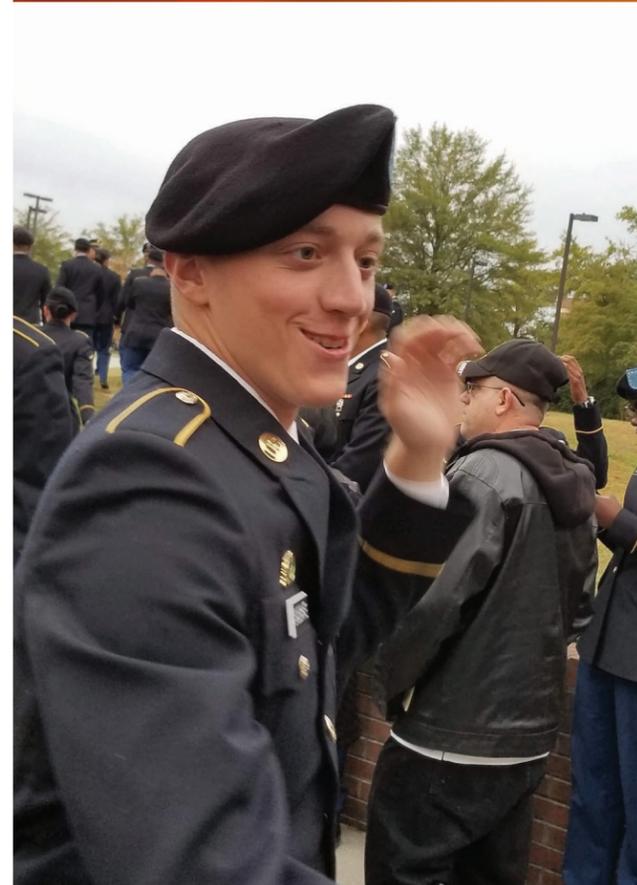
- Join our email list! Send an email to hello@lionseyeinstitute.org and we will ensure that you receive updates and news about us and the people we serve.
- Tell your story! We love helping to share the stories of people impacted by corneal blindness and their restored vision. Send an email to us at info@lionseyeinstitute.org if you are interested in sharing your story.



"I have been honored to serve Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research for the past 30 years. I've seen and experienced the devastation of losing a loved one. I have also experienced the satisfaction of a family learning that their cornea donation restored sight and hope for someone suffering with blindness. We are so honored to have facilitated the gift of sight and welcome you into the Lions Eye Institute family."

—Jason Woody, President and CEO

Garrett Crosswhite Donor



Garrett Crosswhite had a passion for helping others and a love for his country. He joined the U.S. Army after graduating high school and planned to pursue a career in nursing.

Garrett had a special bond with his mom, Julia. He would call and FaceTime his mom at all hours of the day and night, especially during the holidays when he was away on duty. Garrett's favorite holiday movie was Die Hard and on Christmas Eve he and his mom would watch it while on the phone together.

During a period of leave from the Army, Garrett passed away unexpectedly. While his family was devastated, they were able to take comfort in knowing that Garrett was able to donate his corneas to others in need.

When Julia told Garrett's younger brother that Garrett was able to restore sight to two people, he asked if Garrett could see too. I told him that somehow, through his brother's eye donation, that is how it feels, and helps others to continue to live and be happy.



Garrett has always wanted happiness for those around him, making a point to bring light and positivity to any situation. During his time in the Army, sharing his love of rap earned him the title of "Eminem of the Army." When Garrett became an eye donor, he changed the lives of two people forever. Garrett continues to bring joy to the world through the memories of loved ones and the gift of sight.

"Knowing through Garrett's eye donation, he helped two people to see and live happier lives would make him proud."

—Julia Siegel, Garrett's Mom

Contacting Your Donor's Family

Would You Like to Express Your Gratitude to Your Donor's Family?

Many donor families and recipients find correspondence to be a healing experience. Donor families appreciate knowing that their loved one is still positively impacting others.

A Writing Guide for Transplant Recipients:

- Talk about yourself and how the transplant procedure has impacted you.
- Please do not include personal information such as your address, phone number, surgery facility, or physician.
- Please sign using only your first name.
- Enclose a separate sheet of paper with your full name, date of your transplant, and the hospital or surgery center where you received your transplant. This information will not be shared with your donor's family.

Mail your letter to:

Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research
Attention: Donor Family Letter
1410 N. 21st Street
Tampa, FL 33605

Lions Eye Institute will mail your letter to your donor family on your behalf. Your identity will not be shared with them.

If the donor family chooses to respond, we will serve as intermediaries to protect the identity of both parties.

"Even if Andrew couldn't live, he would want other people to. We can all do our part with good deeds and pay it forward to change lives."

— Shebna Dorsey, Donor Mom

Tamara Conkle Recipient



Tamara Conkle is a sixth-generation horse trainer who works on her family farm in Dade City, Florida. On her birthday, her right eye started burning. She took her contacts out and put on her glasses, thinking her eyes needed a rest. Unfortunately, two days later she could not see anything out of that eye.

Tamara's father had lost his eye from a work-related injury, so she knew she had to see someone as soon as possible. Upon seeing Dr. Ahad Mahootchi, Ophthalmologist in Zephyrhills, Florida, he determined Tamara had a fungal infection and prescribed eye drops which cleared the infection, but unfortunately, her cornea was already damaged. Cornea transplant surgery was her only option to restore her sight.

Tamara feels like she was given a second chance, and grateful to enjoy doing things she loves, being outside and taking care of her horses.



"It's life-changing. I'm a person who always says, 'Do what you can today because you don't know what tomorrow brings.' This has been like a brand-new life."

—Tamara Conkle, Gratis Tissue Recipient

Anne Ngo Moog

Recipient



After giving birth to her first daughter, Anne Ngo Moug from Cameroon, Africa was quickly losing vision in one eye. She was referred to Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research to restore her vision. Because of our generous cornea donors and funders, we were able to provide Anne with ocular tissue at no cost through our Gratis Ocular Tissue Program.

Anne recounts that she could not believe how quickly the cornea was prepared for transplant after Lions Eye Institute connected her with a surgeon in Kenya.

Now, Anne says her sight and her hope have been restored for a lifetime. Her cornea donor, Lions Eye Institute and her surgeon gave her a future where she could see her children grow.

“Before the surgery I could barely see the letters on the page of a book, but after my surgery, I can see even the smallest letters now.”

*—Anne Ngo Moog, Mother of two,
Gratis Ocular Tissue Recipient*



About Lions Eye Institute

- The mission of Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research is to set new standards in eye banking, tissue recovery, and ocular research that helps to transform people’s lives through the gift of sight as we honor our tissue donors and their families, while we provide enhanced services for our surgeon partners.
- Our programs include eye and tissue recovery, cornea processing and preparation, distribution of tissue to surgeons for their patients around the world, donor family and recipient services, ocular research, surgeon training, and pediatric vision screenings.
- Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research is the largest combined eye bank and ocular research center in the U.S. As a nonprofit organization, our focus is on innovating and collaborating with surgeons to ease cornea transplantation and improve clinical outcomes. It is our honor to serve as a bridge between the selfless generosity of the eye and tissue donors and surgeons that help to transform lives by restoring sight to over 150,000 people in over 50 countries.

Make a Gift

Your support makes it possible for Lions Eye Institute to restore sight to people all over the world regardless of their ability to afford sight-saving surgery. Please consider making a gift in memory of your cornea donor.

Support Lions Eye Institute Foundation by making a gift online at: lionseyeinstitute.org or mail to:

Lions Eye Institute Foundation
1410 N. 21st Street
Tampa, FL 33605



As stewards of the precious donated gift, we are honored to serve each day with the commitment to and deepest respect for the donor and their family, who make the gift of sight possible.



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