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Constantly Inspired
by the Strength of
Donor Families

Hope in Sight®



Utah Lions Eye Bank
John A. Moran Eye Center

FALL 2021

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Discovery Points to
Potential New Therapy
for AMD continued

Constantly Inspired by the Strength of Donor Families



Sally Hicken

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Returns

Eye Donation Month

My name is Sally Hicken. I started working for the Utah Lions Eye Bank in 2018 as a Donor Coordinator. When a person passes away in Utah, we are notified via a phone call to the donor hotline. Once I got the new referral, I would determine if the deceased person was a good candidate for eye donation and call their family. It's a difficult question to be asked moments after the loss of a loved one: do you want to donate your loved one's eyes? More often than not the answer to this question was yes. I am constantly inspired by the strength of the donor families and their willingness to help strangers through donation in spite of their own tragic loss.

In 2019, I volunteered at the Celebration of Life Monument dedication and had the privilege of meeting some cornea donor families as well as cornea transplant recipients. I saw firsthand the impact my work has on my community which motivated me to learn more about eye banking.

Today I am a Tissue Processor for the eye bank which means that I help eye surgeons by preparing donated corneas for surgery ahead of time. Tissue processing is done in a clean environment similar to an operating room and I perform two types. DMEK processing is done using a microscope to carefully separate the innermost layer of the cornea by hand and insert it into a tiny glass tube. DSAEK preparation is performed using a hand piece with a blade to shave off the front part of the cornea leaving a thin area for the surgeon to transplant. Both techniques took me months of practice to master as they demand a steady hand and attention to detail.

I still work to improve my skills every single day in hopes of giving transplant patients the best possible chance at vision restoration. I feel very lucky to play a role in improving the sight of people in Utah, across the country and across the world.

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Financial Gifts
for Sight

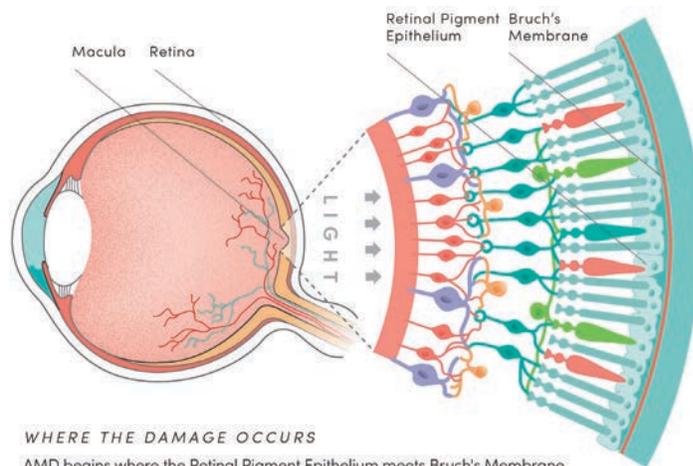
MYTH: I have a previous history of cataract or laser correction surgery, so I cannot pledge my eyes for donation.

FACT: Very few diseases or conditions interfere with your ability to donate your eyes. Eyes that can't be used for transplant can often contribute to education and research efforts.

Discovery Points to Potential New Therapy for AMD



Gregory S. Hageman, PhD, SCTM executive director, left, and Brandi Williams, PhD



WHERE THE DAMAGE OCCURS
AMD begins where the Retinal Pigment Epithelium meets Bruch's Membrane.

ultimately leading to eye damage, which may include abnormal deposits known as drusen and the development of abnormal blood vessels.

Funded in part by generous donors, the SCTM is developing a therapy to boost levels of the protein for these patients.

The SCTM's unique repository of more than 8,000 pairs of donated human eyes played an essential role in the study because there are no animal models that accurately mimic the biology of chromosome 10-directed AMD. This critical resource, developed in collaboration with the Utah Lions Eye Bank, allowed the SCTM team to compare HTRA1 expression in eyes derived from donors with and without chromosome 10-associated risk genotypes.

"We were able to generate these exciting results thanks to our eye donors and their families," said Dr. Hageman. "We are so extremely grateful for their precious gifts."

Dr. Williams said the research will have a broad impact.

"These data should be important to the entire field and to patients with this devastating disease," she said, "especially with respect to the development of therapeutics to correct this genetic defect."

The SCTM was established in 2009 to more quickly and cost-effectively turn scientific discoveries into clinically effective diagnostics and therapies for blinding eye conditions and is currently focused on finding better treatments for AMD. The disease is a major cause of irreversible blindness worldwide and the leading cause of blindness for Americans aged 55 and over.

The SCTM has also developed a new therapy targeting chromosome 1-directed AMD and is preparing to initiate clinical trials—the first step toward FDA approval.

Learn more about the SCTM at medicine.utah.edu/ophthalmology/research/centers/sctm/

Watch Dr. Hageman discuss the SCTM's invaluable eye tissue repository at genetherapylive.com/view/importance-of-donor-resources-hageman

Following more than a decade of research, SCTM Executive Director Gregory S. Hageman, PhD, and his team are pointing the way to new treatments for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) driven by a pair of genes on chromosome 10.

SCTM researchers previously determined AMD is not one disease—as has been long thought—but at least two biologically distinct diseases. Genes on chromosomes 1 and 10 account for at least 90 percent of a person's genetic risk of developing AMD.

The chromosome 10 research team, led by Brandi Williams, PhD, shared its groundbreaking findings, which required access to thousands of donated eyes, in a paper published recently in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America*.

The SCTM discovered that:

- The HtrA1 protein—encoded by chromosome 10—normally increases in a specific part of the retina as we age, where it may play a role in preventing abnormal deposits from accumulating.
- People with AMD-associated genetic variants on chromosome 10 make half as much HtrA1 in this part of the retina as they age,



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www.utaheyebank.org

Heart of the Lion Courier Program



After a longer than anticipated hiatus, our Heart of the Lion Courier Program is back! We appreciate your patience as we temporarily suspended the program out of an abundance of caution. If you are interested in resuming delivery operations, please contact Wade McEntire at wade.mcentire@hsc.utah.edu to schedule driver training and orientation.

Due to the ongoing concerns for large gatherings, at this time we do not have a date for our annual recognition dinner. We will reach out with a proposed date as soon as appropriate.

Wade McEntire
 Utah Lions Eye Bank

Bereavement Support Groups

For bereavement support group information, please contact the University of Utah College of Nursing

801.585.9522

healthcare.utah.edu/caring-connections

We would love to share your story.

If you are the recipient of a cornea, or have a story of a donor that you would like to share, please let us know. Email uleb.familyservices@hsc.utah.edu or just use the QR code! →



EYE DONATION MONTH
 NOVEMBER 2021
EyeDonationMonth.org

A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION

Building Hope • Restoring Sight • Changing Lives



#EyeDonationMonth

MYTH:

Donating eyes for research doesn't restore sight to anyone.

FACT:

Donating eyes for research can potentially help thousands of people regain their sight, as research on glaucoma, retinal disease, eye complications of diabetes and other sight disorders helps to advance the discovery of the cause and effects of these conditions. This can then lead to new treatments and cures.

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utaheyebank.org | uleb@hsc.utah.edu



Join our team!

University of Utah Health
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↑ Scan the QR code to see our job openings. Come join our team!



Utah Lions Eye Bank
John A. Moran Eye Center



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Financial Gifts for Sight

The Utah Lions Eye Bank thanks the following individuals for their generous financial donations July 2021 – October 2021:

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| Milton and Emily Anderson | Donna and John C. Cole | Merlyn and Bonnie T. Johnson | Salt Lake City Lions Club |
| Wells L. and Coleen T. Bagley | Joseph and Nancy Cook | Paul and Geraldine Kilpatrick | Zoila Sanchez |
| Van Bass | Paul and Tonita Crookston
<i>in honor of Price Lions Club</i> | Jean M. Larsen | Gordon and Naoma B. Scheffner |
| Richard and Sharon Bretzing | Carolyn Deru | John and Velma Mabey | James Thomas |
| Madelyn Brownell
<i>in honor of my team called Forever Vision</i> | Raymond M. and Louise Franke Trust
<i>in memory of Jim Loveless</i> | Margie Nielsen
<i>in honor of Gift for Sight</i> | Shanna and Donald A. Thurman
<i>in memory of Hazel Heslop and
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| Doris Buckholtz | Stephen and Leslie Goddard | Jack Oldroyd | Manuel G. and Lupita Q. Vegas |
| Alaina Burrows | DeeAnn Gornichec | Tamara Phillips
<i>in memory of Darlene Phillips</i> | Sheila Van Wagoner |
| Josephine Burton | Shayne and Claire Hill | Warren Phillips
<i>in memory of Darlene Phillips</i> | Nancy and Stephen Williams |
| Capture Lifetimes
<i>in honor of my team called Forever Vision</i> | Mary Jensen | | John Zudis |

Please use the enclosed envelope or QR code to make a donation in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one.
Thank you for your support and generosity.

