

# NEWSIGHT

Winter 2017



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Pearl Goldberg Fellow, Pedro Monsalve, MD, at American Academy of Ophthalmology annual meeting



Executive Director Elizabeth Fout-Caraza (left) and Elina Hackworth, Florida Lions Eye Bank employee of 34 years, at the Lions International Parade of Nations in Chicago. Seven Lions eye banks were represented at the centennial event! Full story on page 3.

## Florida Lions Eye Bank Begins Production of Eye Drops Made From Patients' Own Blood Serum

In August 2017, Florida Lions Eye Bank began production of autologous serum eye drops, or ASED, to serve patients throughout the state of Florida. These eye drops, which are a type of biological therapy, are prepared from the patient's own blood. ASED are used to treat epithelial defects, as well as severe dry eye that hasn't responded to other types of treatment, such as artificial tears. (Continued on page 2)



*Growth factors in patients' own blood can help heal the surface of the eye.*

# Autologous Serum Eye Drops Help Chronic Dry Eye Patients

continued from cover

Autologous serum eye drops have been in existence for several decades, but they are not commonly prescribed due to the complexity of the manufacturing process. Unlike pharmaceutical eye drops, ASED are custom made for each patient. This is because only the patient can safely use drops made with his or her own blood. Using another person's drops could provoke an allergy or infection.

At Florida Lions Eye Bank, ASED are made start-to-finish in the laboratory in Bascom Palmer Eye Institute by specially trained technicians. First, the patient's blood is drawn and delivered to the lab. Next, the blood is placed into a centrifuge to separate blood components. The blood serum is separated from the cells, and diluted with a sterile saline solution under a laminar flow hood in the eye bank lab (pictured below). The diluted serum is then aliquoted into eye droppers. These droppers are labeled, packaged and delivered on ice directly to the patient.

Although this process is labor-intensive, the results have been phenomenal. Of the over 250 patients that Florida Lions Eye Bank provides with ASED, many have reported vast improvements in their dry eye symptoms. Researchers believe this is because blood serum contains naturally-occurring components that promote cell growth and healing. These include albumin, vitamin A, nerve and epidermal growth factors, and antibodies.

Anat Galor, MD, MSPH, Associate Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, has been a proponent of ASED for her patients for several years. "Whatever the underlying biology is, clinically, they work," says Dr. Galor. "I'm a total believer in autologous serum tears."



Technician Ricardo Achata producing autologous serum eye drops in Florida Lions Eye Bank's laboratory.

Do you or someone you know suffer from chronic dry eye? Talk to your ophthalmologist. Autologous serum eye drops might help you feel more comfortable.

## Celebrating the Centennial in Chicago with Lions Clubs International

We're proud to be  
a Lions eye bank!



About 35 of the 80 eye banks in the United States are Lions eye banks. A Lions eye bank is sponsored by a Lions club, district or multiple district and has an established working relationship with a medical facility. Florida Lions Eye Bank has received support from Lions clubs for over 55 years!

In July, Lions Clubs International celebrated 100 years of service in Chicago, the city where the organization was founded in 1917. In honor of a century of good work, 30,000 Lions from around the world assembled at McCormick Place for the 2017 International Convention, and marched along State Street in the Lions International Parade of Nations. Florida Lions Eye Bank was proud to march with Lions of Multiple District 35 (see cover photo).

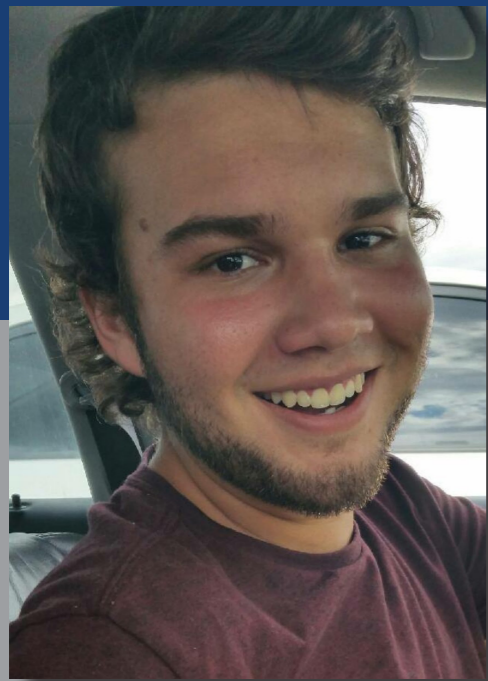
In cooperation with six other Lions eye banks, Florida Lions Eye Bank hosted an informational booth at the convention. Visitors to the booth were invited to learn about corneal transplantation and donation, and take a quiz to receive a commemorative pin. The participating eye banks were Idaho Lions Eye Bank, Utah Lions Eye Bank, Vision First: Indiana Eye Bank, Lions Eye Bank at Albany, Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley, and Nebraska Lions Eye Bank. These seven participating eye banks, which represent only a fraction of all Lions eye banks, restore sight to thousands of people annually!



Left: Lions eye banks' booth at the convention, with eye bank staff from across the United States.



Right: Visitors to the booth take a quiz to test their knowledge of corneal donation and transplantation.



Michael's donation restored vision to two people.

# A Second Chance to See

## Stories about giving and restoring the beauty of sight

*"I find comfort in knowing that his kindness made a difference. I am so proud of his decision to be a donor."*

**-Vivian, Michael's mom**

*"Your loved one shared a part of themselves so I could have better eyesight."*

**-Blanche, corneal transplant recipient**



Eye donor Annabelle gave the gift of sight to two people.

**This year**, Florida Lions Eye Bank has been fortunate to receive many touching letters from both the families of our donors, and recipients of corneal transplants. These letters—shared here with permission of the authors—get to the heart of why we do what we do. We invite you to learn about who our eye donors are, and how their selfless decision to donate reflects their kindness in life. We welcome you to share in our recipients' stories, and read about how their lives were changed for the better after their corneal transplants.

**Jenelle** wrote to Florida Lions Eye Bank about her beloved sister, Annabelle, whose eye donation restored sight to two people. "I would like you to know a little bit about my sister," Jenelle explains. "She was an elementary school teacher whose life's work was to help people. Every student she taught would tell me that she was their favorite teacher. My sister was the one person who stood by my side through laughter, tears, joy, and sorrow. She had the power to make my heart

burst with radiance and courage. Her departure has left a void in many hearts." In keeping with her kind and giving nature, Annabelle became an eye donor in 2011 when she passed away unexpectedly at age 23.

**Blanche**, a corneal transplant recipient, reached out to Florida Lions Eye Bank with a letter of thanks for her donor's family. She writes, "Sending blessings to my donor's family straight from my heart. Your loved one shared a part of themselves so I could have better eyesight. I am deeply appreciative. As a retired teacher, I enjoy reading, playing piano, enjoying nature, and seeing the smile of my great grandson. I feel very blessed. I plan to be an organ donor to share what I can with someone else."

**Eduardo**, another transplant recipient, contacted Florida Lions Eye Bank to send thanks to his donor's family for his improving vision. "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my donor's family for the cornea I've received. I

had cataract surgery that left me with a severe edema and blurry vision. Since the transplant, my vision is slowly getting much better. Thank you for giving me back my sight."

**Vivian** wrote to Florida Lions Eye Bank about her son, Michael, who, like Annabelle, tragically passed away at a young age. Vivian remembers her son as "a free-spirited, sweet and generous soul, the life of the party, who loved to make people laugh. He had the biggest smile, the kindest heart, and he looked for the positive in every situation."

**Michael** was a full-time college student who planned to be an attorney when his life was cut short at age 19. Vivian honored her son's donor designation, a decision she knows was influenced by the death of his father from liver cancer many years earlier. "Losing him," Vivian writes of her son, "Has been unbearably difficult, but I know Michael is thrilled that he gave others a second chance. I find comfort in knowing that

his goodness and kindness made a difference, and I am so proud of his decision to be a donor."

**Thelma**, a third grateful recipient, reached out to her donor's family through Florida Lions Eye Bank to express thanks for the cornea she received. Thelma was surprised to learn that she needed a corneal transplant in November 2016, but her recovery went well and her vision improved gradually. Thelma wrote, "I wish to extend my sincere gratitude for giving me the opportunity to see much better again. Words cannot describe how I feel. I will always be grateful to the family of my donor, and I pray for them daily."

**If you** are a corneal transplant recipient, or the loved one of a cornea donor, and you would like to reach out to Florida Lions Eye Bank, we would love to hear from you. Speak directly to a staff member at 305-482-4925, or email us at [info@flebo.org](mailto:info@flebo.org). To register as an eye, organ, and tissue donor, visit [donatelifeflorida.org](http://donatelifeflorida.org).



# Meet Florida Lions Eye Bank's Newest Team Members



**Ricardo**

Florida Lions Eye Bank welcomed two new full-time Recovery Technicians in 2017. Recovery Technicians are responsible for many essential eye bank functions. They travel to our donors for the recovery of eye tissue, prepare this tissue for transplant in the lab, and coordinate the distribution of tissue to our network of surgeons and researchers.



**Mellissa**

**Mellissa Pottinger** was born in New York City to Jamaican parents. She moved to Miami with her family at age 12, and graduated from Florida International University in 2014 with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. Prior to her role as Recovery Technician, Mellissa worked for four years as a pathology assistant alongside Medical Director Sander R. Dubovy, M.D., in Florida Lions Eye Bank's Ocular Pathology Laboratory. Mellissa enjoys being a part of an organization that gives the precious gift of sight. She considers it an honor to work with those who selflessly choose to become eye donors to Florida Lions Eye Bank. When she's not at work, Mellissa enjoys spending time outdoors and volunteering with youth in her church.

Born and raised in Peru, **Ricardo Achata**— or Ricky, as he's known at the eye bank— moved to Florida in 2006, immediately after graduating high school. He attended Miami Dade College, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biotechnology in 2016. He has interned at an environmental biology company in Hollywood, Florida, and at the prestigious Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. At Sylvester, Ricardo worked alongside Dr. Ana Paula Benaduce researching cancer immunotherapy. In May 2017, Ricardo joined Florida Lions Eye Bank as a Recovery Technician. He enjoys the fast paced work environment, and being part of a close-knit team. In his free time, Ricardo likes to listen to music, go running, and explore Miami.

Together, we restore the beauty of sight.

Financial support from our generous donors lets Florida Lions Eye Bank provide valuable services to our community. Your donations mean that we can provide tissue to ophthalmic researchers at no cost, so they can work harder on curing and preventing blindness. We are also proud to provide gratis tissue to patients without insurance and the means to pay.

Thank you to our generous donors

## Individuals

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## Lions Clubs

Marco Island Lions Club • Ft. Lauderdale Lions Club • Palm Bay Happy Lions Club • Fort Pierce Lions Club • Lake Worth Lions Club • Boca Raton Lions Club • Hialeah Pan American Lions Club • Miami Lakes Lions Club • Miami Lautaro Lions Club • Miami Interamerican Ecuador Lions Club • Ocoee Lions Club • Zephyrhills Lions Club • St. Augustine Lions Club



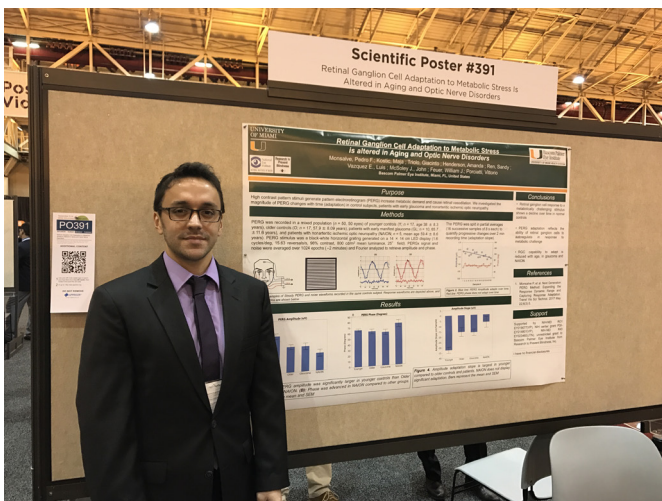


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## Pedro Monsalve, MD, Represents Florida Lions Eye Bank at AAO Annual Meeting



Pedro Monsalve, MD, current Pearl Goldberg Research Fellow, exhibited a poster at the annual American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting in November. This meeting, which is attended by thousands of ophthalmology professionals, displays only

a small number of posters that are submitted every year. Dr. Monsalve's poster highlighted research that he has been working on in the specialized field of neuro-ophthalmology. This research compares the function of retinal ganglion cells between patients with different neurological eye diseases and patients with no eye disease. Retinal ganglion cells are a type of cell that make the connection between the eye and the brain.

Originally from Ecuador, Dr. Monsalve joined Florida Lions Eye Bank in September as the Pearl Goldberg Research Fellow of 2017-2018. This fellowship is awarded each year to a pre-residency physician interested in research related to ophthalmology, eye banking, and corneal transplantation.