

NEWSIGHT

Fall 2021



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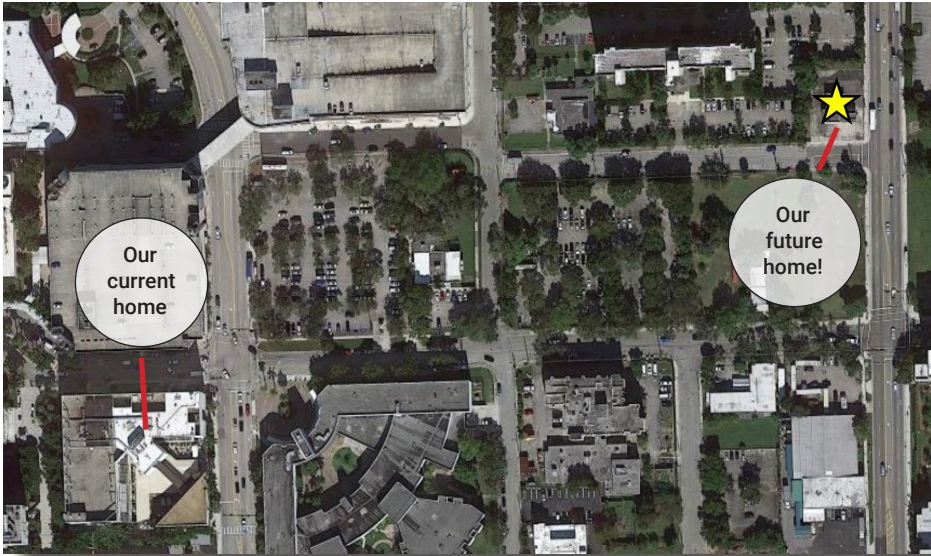
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Focusing On Our Future

For almost 60 years, Florida Lions Eye Bank has been headquartered at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, the #1 eye hospital in the United States. The opportunity to evolve alongside this world-renowned institution has shaped who we are today: a community-focused nonprofit eye bank that collaborates with patients, eye donor families, and the medical community we proudly serve.

So it's with a sense of great excitement and pride that we announce plans to expand our operations, relocating to our own facility that will accommodate our staff and programs, while still maintaining our presence in and collaboration with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

This year, Florida Lions Eye Bank's board of directors voted to purchase an undeveloped lot, just a few blocks away from our current home, as the site for our expansion. Currently, we are working with architects to develop renderings of our future space, which will include dedicated tissue storage and distribution areas, state-of-the-art laboratories for processing tissue and Serum Tears, and facilities for hosting professional education events and surgical training demonstrations.

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"As we have taken on new programs for our surgeons and patients, we recognize the need for a new, state of the art facility that will allow us to continue expanding service to our community."

- Board President, A. Geoffrey Wade

Focusing On Our Future

(Continued from front cover)

Most of our constituents understand that Florida Lions Eye Bank is more than just an eye bank. While we recover, process, store, and distribute corneal and scleral tissue for surgery, we also operate the only ocular pathology laboratory in South Florida. Headed by Medical Director Sander R. Dubovy, MD, the "path lab" is a comprehensive resource for patient diagnosis, specimen evaluation, ocular research, and physician education.



Additionally, we're the only eye bank in the state that produces Serum Tears and PRGF, both ophthalmic biological therapies made from a patient's own blood. We have served over 5,000 patients in the four years since these programs were established, and provide Serum Tears at reduced fees to patients with demonstrated financial need.

“When we survey the state of eye banking, we see that the degree to which we remain on the cutting edge of technology and innovation will determine our ability to continue serving our community at the highest level.”

- Medical Director,
Sander R. Dubovy, MD

As we've evolved, research and innovation has assumed an increasingly significant role in our operations. We recover eye tissue for research and education, distributing it at no cost to medical researchers developing new surgical techniques, medications, and ophthalmic technologies. Some of this tissue is also used in the many "wet labs," or corneal transplant technique training sessions, we host each year. Innovation is vital as well. Partnering with Bascom Palmer physicians and scientists, we focus on developing new devices to advance the field of eye banking and ophthalmology. In recent years, we were awarded two patents, and are working on bringing ophthalmic and surgical devices to market.

Expanding our Serum Tears and PRGF programs, coupled with increased demand for pre-cut tissue for EK surgery, requires a larger laboratory facility than our current offices provide. Furthermore, we're aware that in the near future, corneal transplantation will be cellular: many corneal transplants will involve grafting of lab-grown cells, rather than transplanting donor corneas. To that end, our new facility will house a GMP-compliant, high tech laboratory in which human corneal cells can be grown in culture. *(Continued, next page)*

Above: Executive Director Elizabeth Fout and Medical Director Sander R. Dubovy, MD, at the site of our future headquarters prior to demolition.



Florida Lions Eye Bank Announces Expansion to New Facility

This will allow us to remain abreast of cutting-edge technology while still providing safe and effective corneal tissue for transplant surgeries in the decades to come. We believe that in the future, eye banks will measure success not by corneas recovered and transplanted, but by cells grown and grafted.

After 60 years of success, this is a giant step for Florida Lions Eye Bank, one that has us excited and energized. It also creates outreach opportunities where our constituents can both provide and access support for the fundraising campaign that Beauty of Sight Foundation will conduct to fulfill our vision of a state-of-the-art facility, and allow us to flourish as a leader in our field. In addition to raising funds for construction, we also plan to establish an endowment fund that will allow donors to underwrite programs and operations to ensure continued growth and expansion of Florida Lions Eye Bank services, while recognizing the community's embrace of our mission.



Above: The site of our future headquarters after demolition.

Watch for our groundbreaking in 2022! Meanwhile, stay in touch by visiting our website at www.fleb.org, our Facebook page, or contacting our office at 305-326-6359.

From the desk of Elizabeth Fout, Executive Director

Along with Florida Lions Eye Bank's staff and Board of Directors, I am very excited about our plans to expand. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to grow our mission, expand service to our community, and lead the future of eye banking.

I invite our constituency and the greater community to become involved. Going forward, there will be opportunities to donate, volunteer, organize, and join the Florida Lions Eye Bank's Beauty of Sight Foundation family!

If you'd like to help, or just want additional information, please email me directly at efcaraza@med.miami.edu. These are stirring times, and we want to share our success and excitement with one and all. Thank you!

Corneal Allogenic Intrastromal Ring Segments:



*Dr. Soosan Jacobs,
creator of CAIRS.*

Florida Lions Eye Bank has recently started processing and distributing CAIRS tissue for corneal surgeries. CAIRS, which stands for Corneal Allogenic Intrastromal Ring Segments, is a novel method of preparing human corneal tissue grafts for use in keratoconus patients.

CAIRS is based on an earlier technology known as synthetic ICRS, or Intracorneal Ring Segments. Synthetic ICRS, as the name suggests, are tiny, plastic, C-shaped implants surgically placed within the cornea of a person with keratoconus. These plastic implants reshape the irregular curvature of a cornea with keratoconus, improving visual acuity and, in some cases, delaying or eliminating the need for a corneal transplant.

Synthetic ICRS have the disadvantage of looking artificial and lending a perceptible glint to the eye that some patients find troubling. Complications are not uncommon: up to 30% of patients who receive synthetic ICRS report adverse effects including thinning of the cornea, migration of the ICRS device, and infection. In response to these deficient patient outcomes with synthetic ICRS, Dr. Jacob explored using human corneal tissue instead of plastic in a similar implantation procedure and created CAIRS.

CAIRS tissue is prepared using a donor cornea rather than synthetic material. The epithelium, or outermost layer of the cornea, and the endothelium, or innermost layer, are both removed. This eliminates most of the cellular material that might provoke an inflammatory response in the recipient. A double trephine, or surgical cutting tool, is used to punch out a ring-shaped or C-shaped graft from the outer edge of the donor cornea. This graft is then cut to the necessary dimensions and inserted into surgically created channels within the recipient's own cornea.

CAIRS works by adding tissue to the perimeter of the recipient's cornea, which flattens and reshapes the cornea thereby improving keratoconus symptoms. Explains Dr. Jacobs of human corneal graft material, "It has advantages over synthetic ring segments, in being more biocompatible, having a reduced risk of complications, and having greater efficacy."



*Synthetic ICRS, pictured, have a
disadvantage of looking artificial.*

Dr. Jacobs began using CAIRS with her own patients, and quickly observed positive outcomes. CAIRS not only has a lower risk of complications than synthetic

ICRS, but a lower risk of rejection than other types of corneal transplant surgery, making it an appealing alternative to traditional corneal transplantation for some keratoconus patients. The type of tissue that's used in CAIRS—the stroma—is less antigenic, or likely to provoke an immune response, than a full-thickness graft used in traditional corneal transplant surgery. A very low volume of tissue is implanted, and once in place, is surrounded by host stroma. This helps the CAIRS tissue quickly integrate into the recipient's cornea.

Corneal transplants are already considered to be at low risk for rejection compared to other types of transplants. However, the possibility of rejection and graft failure do exist. Corneal transplant recipients often undergo long-term use of steroid eyedrops to suppress an immune response to the donor cornea. In contrast, Dr. Jacobs typically prescribes steroid eye drops to CAIRS patients for just six weeks after surgery.

CAIRS is not for all patients. Most people who require a corneal transplant specifically need the endothelium of a donor cornea. This is the rationale behind endothelial keratoplasty, or EK, surgery: donor endothelium is transplanted along with an extremely thin layer of stromal tissue. CAIRS is unusual because the layer of the cornea most often transplanted—the endothelium—is not utilized.

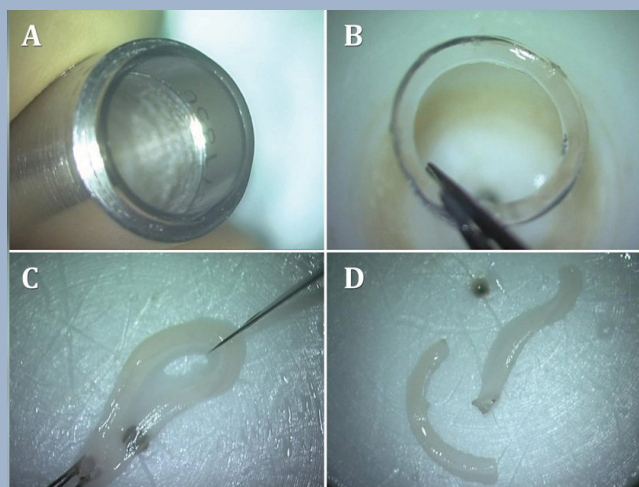


A New Technique in Corneal Tissue Processing

States Dr. Jacobs of this novel procedure, "CAIRS retains all the advantages and avoids all the disadvantages of ICRS. It flattens a steep or bulging cornea, improves both uncorrected and corrected distance and near visual acuities, helps redistribute biomechanical stress forces upon the cornea, and thereby helps decrease progression of keratoconus. In addition, since it is human corneal tissue that is being implanted, it integrates well into the patient's cornea and therefore has a much lower risk of complications and therefore is preferable to synthetic ICRS."

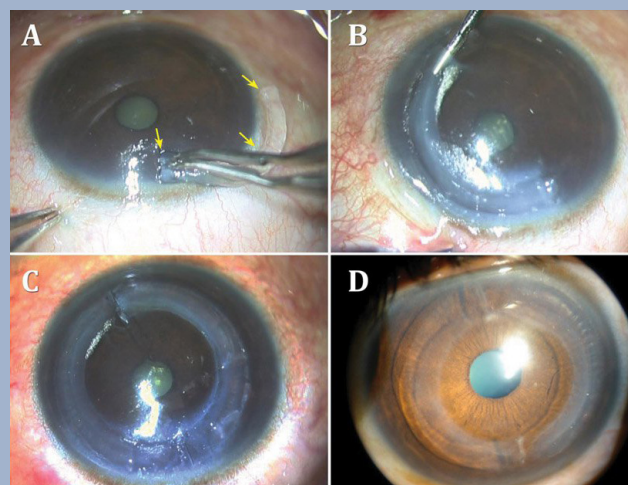
Florida Lions Eye Bank Director of Business & Project Development, William Buras, met with Dr. Soosan Jacobs when the doctor delivered a presentation about CAIRS at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami. Bascom Palmer physician Guillermo Amescua, MD, Medical Director of the Ocular Surface Program, was interested in trying CAIRS tissue for his keratoconus patients. With Buras' facilitation, Dr. Jacobs shared this novel tissue processing technique with Florida Lions Eye Bank. With that, we became one of the first eye banks in the United States to process this type of tissue.

Sabrina Rodriguez, CEPT, Supervisor of Laboratory Services, is the first CAIRS-trained technician at Florida Lions Eye Bank. Sabrina, who has been with Florida Lions Eye Bank since 2013, now has the distinction of processing the first CAIRS graft that was implanted in a Bascom Palmer Eye Institute patient. The successful surgery, performed by Dr. Amescua, took place in early June of 2021. The recipient of the CAIRS graft is very happy with the outcome of the procedure.



Above: CAIRS tissue being processed.

- A: The double trephine used to punch a ring-shaped graft from a donor cornea.
- B: The resultant ring-shaped graft.
- C: The ring-shaped graft is cut into two pieces.
- D: The two pieces are trimmed to the needed size for use in surgery.



Above: CAIRS surgery in progress.

- A: The CAIRS tissue is inserted in a surgically created incision in the recipient's cornea.
- B: The tissue is drawn through a surgically created channel along the outer edge of the cornea.
- C: Immediately after surgery. Steps A and B have each been repeated twice, using two pieces of CAIRS tissue.
- D: Several weeks after recovery, the CAIRS tissue remains visible but is much clearer.

Florida Lions Eye Bank and Beauty of Sight Foundation Joint Installation Gala 2021

On Saturday, June 5, 2021, 75 vital community members assembled at the Signature Grand in Davie, Florida for the first-ever Florida Lions Eye Bank and Beauty of Sight Foundation combined Installation ceremony. Unlike previous installation celebrations of its kind, this event included the installation of boards of directors of both organizations, acknowledging the collaboration and shared vision of Florida Lions Eye Bank and its fundraising arm and partner organization, Beauty of Sight, the Florida Lions Eye Bank Foundation.



Guests enjoyed an open bar, sponsored by Wells Fargo and Calamos Investments. A local guitar and vocalist duo played live jazz. Many generous donors contributed items for a silent auction, with proceeds benefiting Florida Lions Eye Bank and Beauty of Sight Foundation. It was heartening to see so many people gathered in support of both organizations, especially since the 2020 Installation Celebration was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Incoming board president, International Director A. Geoffrey Wade, addressed the crowd over passed hors d'oeuvres and a plated dinner. Outgoing Florida Lions Eye Bank board president Kenneth Engstrom, PDG, thanked the board of directors for two continuous years of service.

The 2020-2021 Ross Carr award was presented by Joel Levenston, PVDG to incoming board president Geoff Wade, ID.



ID. The Ross Carr award recognizes the exemplary leadership of an individual lion or eye banker. A charter member of the Port St. Lucie West Lions Club, Geoff has served on the Florida Lions Eye Bank board for many years in the position

of treasurer and vice president. With over 30 years of experience in the financial industry, Geoff has gone above and beyond in lending his professional expertise to ensure the long-term health of Florida Lions Eye Bank's investment portfolios.

For the first time ever, the Jimmy Nelson award was given to a club in District 35 L. In recognition of their ardent, consistent financial support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ocala Lions Club received this prestigious annual award. This generous club has made a donation to Florida Lions Eye Bank each and every quarter for five consecutive years, championing programs such as gratis corneal tissue and reduced- and no-fee

Serum Tears.

The Ocala Lions Club, established in 1926, is one of the oldest, continuously serving Lions Clubs in Multiple District 35.



(Continued on back cover)

This page, top left: The Florida Lions Eye Bank Board of Directors.

Bottom left: The Beauty of Sight Foundation Board of Directors.

Top right: Joel Levenston, PVDG presents the Ross Carr award to incoming president Geoff Wade, ID.

Bottom right: Medical Director Sander R. Dubovy, center, with son Chase at left and Juan Tejera, PCC at right.



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Beauty of Sight, the Florida Lions Eye Bank Foundation, is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All financial donations made to Beauty of Sight Foundation are tax-deductible. Your financial contribution allows us to continue our valuable programming: providing tissue for medical research and education at no cost, offering financial assistance to Serum Tears patients, and ensuring that corneal tissue for transplant is available to patients without the means to pay. Visit our website at www.beautyofsight.org, or call us at (305) 326-6359 for more information.

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Florida Lions Eye Bank and Beauty of Sight Foundation Joint Installation Gala 2021

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Acknowledging the current global health crisis and its impact upon our community, Sander R. Dubovy, MD, delivered the Medical Director's Year in Review. In his address, Dr. Dubovy thanked attendees, board members and staff, as well as eye donors and their loved ones, for their support of Florida Lions Eye Bank and Beauty of Sight Foundation during the trying times presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To receive an invitation to next year's Installation Celebration, please email m.budnetz@miami.edu. To help create a world without blindness, please visit www.beautyofsight.org. To learn more about the work of Florida Lions Eye Bank, please visit www.fleb.org.



Above, left to right, Lee Maloff, 2nd VDG, Tony Montes, DG, Elbio Gimenez, PDG, Rita Gimenez, Elizabeth Tejera, Andre Doren, Juan Tejera, PCC, and Geoff Wade, ID.

Opposite, left to right: incoming president Geoff Wade, ID, Executive Director Elizabeth Fout, outgoing president Kenneth Engstrom, PDG.