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# SightLine

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Fall, 2005

## Midwest Eye-Banks Acquires Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey



(L to R) LEBNJ Board members Stanley Grossman and Ken Mattfield, with former Executive Director Marshall Klein.

Federal regulations and growing public health concerns have challenged the ability of small eye banks to function. The recent acquisition of the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey (LEBNJ) by Midwest Eye-Banks will enable the New Jersey eye bank to benefit from a more extensive clinical and administrative infrastructure.

“The Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey needed our help,” Susan d’Olive Mozena, Midwest Eye-Banks’ President and Chief Executive Officer, says of the affiliation. “We reviewed the situation carefully with them, and felt Midwest Eye-Banks could offer the resources necessary to sustain and improve their operation.”

LEBNJ had been in operation since 1970. In late 2004, Marshall Klein, its executive director and a longtime eye banking professional, announced his impending retirement. While planning for this transition, LEBNJ’s Board of Directors contacted Midwest Eye-Banks to discuss a potential affiliation. This conversation resulted in Midwest Eye-Banks’ acquisition of LEBNJ, effective August 25, 2005. The Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey is now operating as a subsidiary of Midwest Eye-Banks.

Within two months of Midwest Eye-Banks’ acquisition of LEBNJ, the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) announced it had awarded LEBNJ a three-year accreditation. “It’s a testament to the clinical quality improvements that have taken place,” Mozena explains. “Surgeons receiving tissue from the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey can count on its quality and on our service.”

William H. Constad, M.D., Medical Director of the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey and a member of Hudson Eye Physicians & Surgeons, welcomes Midwest Eye-Banks’ oversight of LEBNJ. “We will benefit from Midwest’s management, including improved coordination and cooperation with

related agencies, such as the New Jersey Sharing Network, the organ procurement organization serving the state,” he says. Dr. Constad, a cornea surgeon in private practice in Jersey City, is also a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-New Jersey Medical School.

“We hope to improve hospital relations, and we hope to cultivate closer relationships with New Jersey physicians,” explains Dr. Constad. “There will be more interaction and communication between physicians’ offices and the Eye Bank. In the past, physicians contacted a central distribution center only.”

Even before Midwest Eye-Banks officially assumed operation of the New Jersey facility, it deployed some of its own clinical staff at the eye bank’s laboratory in Springfield to provide assistance. Following the acquisition, Brad Tennant, Midwest Eye-Banks’ Vice President, Clinical Operations, was named LEBNJ’s Interim Executive Director, while a permanent executive director is being recruited.

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"I'm pleased at the success we have had in bringing New Jersey on board," says Tennant. "It's been a lot of hard work and a lot of travel for our staff. Personnel from each of our Illinois and Michigan offices have been on-site at the [LEBNJ] Eye Bank almost non-stop since it affiliated with Midwest Eye-Banks." Tennant adds that maintaining the Eye-Bank's level of quality and service to Illinois, Michigan and northwest Ohio surgeons has been paramount throughout the LEBNJ acquisition.

LEBNJ is the first eye bank to partner with Midwest since the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey – then known as the BroMenn-Watson Gailey Eye-Bank – affiliated with the organization in 1996.

One of the major improvements to LEBNJ's operation is the information technology management provided by Midwest Eye-Banks.

"We're making a considerable investment in the information systems infrastructure in New Jersey," explains Collin Ross, Systems Manager. "All computers, electronic equipment such as telephones and faxes, and communication lines are being upgraded to support our clinical information system and modern software applications. This will facilitate both internal and external communications, and allow the eye bank to operate much more efficiently."

Midwest Eye-Banks is pleased to welcome LEBNJ staff members Nicole Lewis, Beatrice Poultney and Cindy Darius to its team. And, while it addresses LEBNJ's information technology needs, it is also beefing up the organization's quality improvement, public relations, community outreach and fund development programs.



**Brad Tennant,**  
Interim Executive Director.

"We are looking forward to offering the same excellent service to New Jersey surgeons and patients that we offer those in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio," Interim Director Brad Tennant says of the New Jersey eye banking operation. Tennant says he also expects productive and positive collaboration with the New Jersey Sharing Network, the region's organ and tissue procurement organization.

## Meet the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey Medical Directors

### ■ WILLIAM H. CONSTAD, M.D.

Dr. Constad earned his undergraduate degree in 1975 at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania. Graduate studies took place at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh (1975-76), the University of East Ramon Magsaysay Medical School in the Philippines (1976-78), and the Medical College of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia (1978-80). Postdoctoral training included a fellowship in Diseases and Surgery of the Cornea at the New York Eye & Ear Infirmary.

In addition to his faculty appointment as a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey–New Jersey Medical School, Dr. Constad has been in private practice with Hudson Eye Physicians and Surgeons since 1985. He has served on multiple committees for the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) and Jersey City Medical Center, and has been named among the New York Metro Area's Top Doctors by Castle Connolly Medical, Ltd.

Dr. Constad has been directly involved with the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey since 1988, and has served as its Medical Director from 1992-95 and from 1997-present. He resides in Martinsville, New Jersey.

### ■ MARK A. LISTER, M.D.

Dr. Lister earned his undergraduate degree from Seton Hall University in 1975, and his doctorate from Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara in 1979. He completed his cornea fellowship at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary in 1986, and is a Clinical Associate Professor at both New York Medical College and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Among his hospital appointments, Dr. Lister is Director of Cornea, External Disease and Ophthalmic Surgery at Metropolitan Hospital in New York City. He is also Director of Cornea at Columbus Hospital in Newark. He serves as an attending physician at Ocean County Medical Center in Brick, NJ, the Clara Maas Medical Center in Belleville, NJ and St. Mary Hospital in Jersey City.

Dr. Lister resides in Montclair, New Jersey.

### ■ DAVID SHU-CHIH CHU, M.D.

Dr. Chu completed his undergraduate studies at Bowdoin College in 1991, and earned his doctorate from the New York University School of Medicine in 1995. He completed a Clinical Fellowship in Ocular Immunology/Uveitis at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Harvard Medical School, in 2001.

Since that time, Dr. Chu has served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMD-NJ), and as a Clinical Instructor/Resident Coordinator at New York Medical College. He is an attending physician at both UMD-NJ University Hospital and the East Orange Veterans Affairs Medical Center. In 1999, the Pan American Congress of Ophthalmology honored Dr. Chu with an award for his study of intracorneal precipitates among HIV+ patients.

Dr. Chu has served on the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey Board of Directors since 2004. He resides in Morristown, New Jersey.

All Medical Directors for the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey are ophthalmologists certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology.

# Illinois Adopts First-Person Consent for Eye, Organ and Tissue Donation



Chuck Pivoney,  
Vice President,  
Illinois Operations

When Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed House Bill 1077 into law on June 24th, Illinois became the 43rd state to pass laws honoring an individual's legally-binding decision to become an organ and tissue donor. Michigan and New Jersey passed similar laws in recent years.

Illinois' new first-person consent legislation takes effect January 1, 2006. Under the new law, additional witnesses or additional consent from a prospective donor's family will not be required in order to carry out the donor's wishes. Currently, signing the back of a driver's license and/or joining the Illinois Organ and Tissue Donor Registry through the Illinois Secretary of State's office is only the first step. It documents a person's intent to donate, in case family members are not aware of the prospective donor's wishes. However, until the new law takes effect, family members must give consent for organ and tissue procurement agencies to honor those wishes.

Chuck Pivoney, Midwest Eye-Banks' Vice President, Illinois Operations, believes the new legislation is a step in the right direction – not just for organ and tissue procurement organizations, but for donor families. "That's what I like about the change," he says. "Someone can now make a decision to donate, and that decision relieves the next-of-kin of the responsibility. It's one less burden at a time when they're already overwhelmed."

Pivoney explains that the first-person consent legislation has the potential to strengthen the Illinois Eye-Bank's relationship with funeral homes and other agencies by shortening death-to-preservation intervals for recovery of corneal tissue. "The shorter interval can also help to ensure the quality of the tissue," he adds.

According to the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network, Elmhurst, Illinois, Illinois' first-person consent legislation is an opportunity to save more lives. Gift of Hope predicts a 10 percent increase in organ donation, meaning as many as 1,000 more lives could be saved over the next 10 years. In addition, Gift of Hope points out that the law will help to ensure that each prospective donor's wishes are honored at the time of death.

Illinois residents who have already registered their donation wishes by joining the Illinois Organ and Tissue Donor Registry, or by signing their driver's licenses, should contact the Secretary of State after January 1, 2006 to update their information. This can be handled through the Life Goes On program Web site at [www.lifegoeson.com](http://www.lifegoeson.com). Following the January 1 implementation of first-person consent, there will no longer be a provision for signing the back of a driver's license. New driver's licenses will carry a "Donor" imprint for those who have registered.

For more information about first-person consent or to join the Illinois Secretary of State Organ and Tissue Donor Registry, visit <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/programs/organdonor/registry.html>.



# Michigan Corneal Surgeon Participates in Historic ORBIS Mission to Libya

There is considerable reward in teaching. There's even more reward in performing the first corneal transplant in a nation's history.

When you are one of the first non-Libyans to do both in the Tripoli Eye Hospital, "that's pretty exciting," notes Kevin Lavery, M.D., a cornea surgeon in Jackson, Michigan, and clinical professor of Ophthalmology at the Wayne State University School of Medicine.

Dr. Lavery was one member of an international team of ophthalmologists that conducted an eight-day mission in Libya through ORBIS, a humanitarian organization whose mission is to preserve and restore eyesight by strengthening local resources in developing areas. Ophthalmologists volunteer to travel to developing countries throughout the world, performing procedures together with surgeons from the host countries, teaching them current techniques

and offering standards of practice for ancillary staff.

This was the eighth mission for Dr. Lavery, who has been to Cuba, India, Bangladesh, Kurdistan, Peru, China and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, he helped establish the first eye bank in Africa.

Midwest Eye-Banks collaborates regularly with its affiliated cornea surgeons who participate in ORBIS missions. In this case, the Michigan Eye-Bank provided three corneas for use in Libya. There are more than 1,000 people on the waiting list for a corneal transplant in Libya, and no corneal surgeons are available to serve the six million people in that country.

"I enjoy teaching," says Dr. Lavery. Although ORBIS has fully equipped operating room suites on its transport plane, its philosophy is to "go into their hospitals with their equipment and show them what's possible," he adds. "You need to show them a cogent

argument of where they are, where the rest of the world is and where they should be" in terms of corneal transplant surgery.

The ORBIS team includes biomedical technicians who repair malfunctioning equipment. More than 60 percent of the medical equipment in countries visited by ORBIS does not work, Dr. Lavery says.

Being an American in a North African Arab nation like Libya may seem intimidating. However, Dr. Lavery found it rewarding in its truest humanitarian sense. "Libyans were very supportive of Americans," he says. Wherever he went he was told, "We love America."

Despite the years of animosity between the governments of Libya and the United States, he says at the "people level" the United States is revered as "the land of opportunity, freedom and economic prosperity."

SightLine is a publication of Midwest Eye-Banks, a 501(c)(3), independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight.

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