

“I do have a basic philosophy that  
the only thing you have left when  
you die is what you gave away.”

—NORMAN KNIGHT, PHILANTHROPIST

# FUNDING & PHILANTHROPY

# THE GIFT OF SIGHT

The clinical, educational, and scientific endeavors of the HMS Department of Ophthalmology faculty garner support from many sources. Private funds from individuals, families, or foundations, as well as corporate and government grants, all provide for the essential infrastructure that allows faculty to improve the quality of life for countless individuals with vision loss. Today, significant inroads into many areas of ophthalmic medicine and science have set the stage for potential breakthroughs: regenerating optic nerves and repairing damaged retina cells with stem cells, providing “personalized” care to patients using an individual’s genetic blueprint, even restoring some sight to the blind with a retinal prosthetic. Once fodder for fiction, the realm of scientific possibility and patient care is widening rapidly, and there is new hope on the horizon for millions of sight-challenged people around the globe.

As these exciting efforts continue to unfold, we would like to highlight the extraordinary support of several of the department’s key foundation partners, alumni, and generous friends. In his quote introducing this section, Mr. Norman Knight, one of the department’s most ardent and loyal supporters, reminds us that the unflagging commitment and generosity of every supporter continues to make the department’s mission possible. Their gifts, large or small, continually change lives in many ways—whether it’s support to accelerate critical areas of vision research, acquire highly specialized equipment for ophthalmic procedures, support the training of promising young ophthalmologists, or perform life-changing surgeries on children.

### NIH/NEI funding support

The HMS Department of Ophthalmology leads the country in acquiring support for eye research from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Numerous grants (R-01, R-08 and K-12 grants, among others) reflect the diversity of our research programs and the significant caliber of our investigators. Total NIH vision research funding in 2008 to HMS Ophthalmology topped \$26 million, according to a 2009 ranking by *Ophthalmology Times*. This is more than twice the level of funding received by any other academic ophthalmology department in the United States.

Harvard Medical School Department of Ophthalmology	\$26.3 M
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (Wilmer Eye Institute)	\$13.5 million
University of Pennsylvania (Scheie Eye Institute)	\$12.0 million
Washington University in St. Louis	\$11.6 million
University of Wisconsin, Madison	\$9.1 million

### DONOR PROFILE: NORMAN KNIGHT

#### A generous friend to all

There is perhaps no greater friend to Mass. Eye and Ear than Norman Knight. A self-made broadcast pioneer and media mogul, this humble man has supported the department’s clinicians, scientists, and nurses with the same vision, drive, and passion that propelled him to the top of his field.

Norman Knight is a man who cares deeply about people and seeks out opportunities to empower individuals to achieve their best. Through scholarships for aspiring nurses, leadership awards for rising clinician scientists, and support for employees faced with personal crises, his impact is broad, personal, and profound.

His philanthropy has helped put Mass. Eye and Ear on the forefront of major clinical and research initiatives, including hyperbaric medicine, head and neck cancer research, and nursing excellence. In the HMS Department of Ophthalmology, Mr. Knight endowed The Norman Knight Leadership Development Award, which provides critical seed funding to young ophthalmologists at the start of their academic careers. Recent recipients include Ivana Kim, MD (Retina); Dean Cestari, MD (Neuro-Ophthalmology); and Ula Jurkunas, MD (Cornea). “The Norman Knight Award had a great impact on my research career,” says Dr. Jurkunas, whose research into stem cell therapy may lead to novel treatments for corneal diseases. “I’m absolutely amazed at his spirit and his willingness to help.”

Mr. Knight’s interests extend to technology as well. In recent years, his generosity has led to the purchase of two anterior segment optical coherence tomography (AS-OCT) scanners (see sidebar) for the Retina and Cornea Services, and a pulse dye laser in the Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Service. This equipment is used every day to maximize the care and treatment of patients and further the department’s research efforts.

“Over the years, Norman’s selfless spirit has touched so much of what we do at Mass. Eye and Ear, and for that we are truly grateful,” says HMS Department of Ophthalmology Chief and Chair, Dr. Joan Miller. “Thanks to Norman’s many generous endowments, Mass. Eye and Ear and countless patients will continue to benefit from his philanthropy for generations to come.”

When asked to reflect on his own generosity, Mr. Knight characteristically turned the attention back to the hospital. He asked, “What would you do if Mass. Eye and Ear wasn’t here? Where would you get treated for eye diseases that no one else can handle?”

Thanks in large part to Mr. Knight’s generosity, that’s a question that may never need an answer.



#### A gift in action

Thanks to Mr. Knight’s generosity, the Cornea Department at Mass. Eye and Ear now utilizes a high-tech, AS-OCT ophthalmic scanner—a noncontact imaging modality—that provides detailed cross-sectional cornea images. With this tool, HMS cornea faculty can optimize patient care and conduct research to improve current treatments. AS-OCT is used to:



#### Patient Care

- Assess corneal pathologies
- Diagnose and manage corneal infections
- Detect corneal melts by measuring/monitoring corneal thickness
- Immediately evaluate post-surgical success of lamellar transplants in patients with Fuchs’ Dystrophy and bullous keratopathy ; this capability has enabled fast resolution of complications and significantly improved success rates.

#### Current Research Trials

- Develop an algorithm to differentiate scar tissue from inflammation; this will minimize the use of steroids on patients, which can have harmful side effects.
- Analyze the thickness of deadly ocular surface tumors prior to excision; depending on its thickness, a surgical procedure may be eliminated by combining a biopsy of the lymph nodes.





#### DONOR PROFILE:

### PHILIP & MARJORIE GERDINE

#### Creating a legacy

Some time ago, visual impairments literally jeopardized the careers of Drs. Philip and Marjorie Gerdine. Dr. Philip Gerdine, an international finance executive, was diagnosed with Fuch's Dystrophy in 1994; his wife Marjorie, a clinical child psychologist, learned of her age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in 2003. Both sought help from several major medical institutions, and were delighted by the integrated approach offered at Mass. Eye and Ear.

The Gerdines have been quite impressed by the quality of care provided by Joan W. Miller, MD, Chief of Ophthalmology, and a leading expert in treating AMD. Dr. Marjorie Gerdine's concerns about the disease were considerably allayed once she met Dr. Miller, who explained that she had a mild case of the dry form of AMD, which is less severe and progresses much more slowly than the wet form. Her husband's care has been guided by Dr. Miller for almost six years and he has progressed to the point where his vision, with help, is almost normal. Both were able to productively continue their professional lives.

In appreciation for their care at Mass. Eye and Ear, they became interested in encouraging young physicians to come to Mass. Eye and Ear to pursue research initiatives in their own specialties, and to take advantage of its rich and diverse urban clinical environment. This led the Gerdines to a decision to leave a bequest of \$1.3 million to permanently endow the *Marjorie and Philip Gerdine Fellowship in Ophthalmology*. "Our care at this institution, which for many years has occupied a pre-eminent role in medical research, education and clinical practice, has proven invaluable," said Dr. (Philip) Gerdine. "We are grateful for the opportunity to help support the institution's goals."

#### What will your legacy be?

Generous gifts propel our efforts forward and help seed discoveries that provide lasting legacies to society.

#### Finding Cures

Breakthroughs happen every day. By making a gift to support the research of your physician or a particular subspecialty area, you will help to accelerate the development of new treatments, and make an impact on people all over the world.

#### Training the Next Generation

The HMS Department of Ophthalmology trains the top medical residents and fellows in the country, helping to ensure that specialty care is available to people wherever they live. When you make a gift to support teaching funds and endowments, you are investing in a healthier future.

#### Providing Exceptional Care

Maintaining the highest level of patient care depends on continuously upgrading equipment, facilities, and technology. When you make an unrestricted gift, your support is used where it is needed most.

*To learn more about gift-giving programs, please contact Melissa Paul, Chief Development Officer for Mass. Eye and Ear, at [melissa\\_paul@meei.harvard.edu](mailto:melissa_paul@meei.harvard.edu) or call 617-573-4168.*

#### DONOR PROFILE:

### BOB NASER

#### Generous friend issues challenge for low vision study

"Generous" is the first word that comes to mind when one thinks of Bob Naser. The phrase "A man of action" follows soon after. Mr. Naser wants to make a difference, and wants to help encourage others to do so as well. That's why after sitting down with Dr. Mary Lou Jackson, Director of the Vision Rehabilitation Center at Mass. Eye and Ear, to learn about the opportunity and promise of research to evaluate patient outcomes after vision rehabilitation services, he couldn't stay idle.

"How can I help?" he asked.. Dr. Jackson explained that the department needed \$120,000 to launch a new study that would ultimately impact how vision rehabilitation services are delivered in the future; moreover, the study had the potential to significantly improve the care and quality of life for many thousands of low vision patients. To this, Mr. Naser issued a challenge: he would give half of the funds if Mass. Eye and Ear could raise a matching amount from other patients and friends.

And that is exactly what Dr. Jackson and others did. "We were very excited about Mr. Naser's challenge; it gave us a wonderful reason to call people who we knew were passionate about vision rehabilitation – and to ask for their help," Dr. Jackson says. "We were so pleased to be able to meet his challenge, and to exceed it, with \$10,000 in additional funds raised. This important project may never have happened without Bob's inspiration and generosity."

When asked about his generous gift, he simply said, "I was inspired and I heard the need. I was in a position to help."

This isn't the first time that Mr. Naser has issued a challenge to the Mass. Eye and Ear.. In 2007, he made his first challenge grant of \$55,000 to support the work of Dr. Steven Rauch in his research on balance. Once again, the department exceeded its goal and raised over \$130,000. This grant was used to develop an ambulatory vestibular monitoring device.



### Wycliffe Grousbeck, MBA, JD

Chair, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmiry Board of Directors

Wycliffe "Wyc" Grousbeck was elected Chair of Mass. Eye and Ear's Board of Directors in January, 2010. Wyc has been devoted to research and educational initiatives relating to vision and the search for cures to blinding conditions that are genetically-based, such as Leber congenital amaurosis, which causes blindness or severe visual impairment at birth or during the first months of life; and retinitis pigmentosa, another congenital condition which leads to progressive vision loss, often in the first decades of life. Wyc's wife, Corinne, founded and serves as chair of the Trust Board at Perkins School for the Blind, in nearby Watertown, MA. This institution is devoted to educating blind and blind/deaf students worldwide and they are both active in other vision-related causes.

Wyc and Corinne were the innovators behind the successful October 2010 gala "Sense-ation," for Mass. Eye and Ear's newly created *Mass. Eye and Ear Cure for Kids Fund*. The event raised more than one million dollars. The proceeds will fund innovative research in pediatric vision and hearing disease, provide care for needy kids who come to Mass Eye and Ear for treatment, and form a basis for a foundation that will continue to support these efforts into the 21st century and beyond.

A graduate of Princeton University, Wyc received a JD from University of Michigan and an MBA from Stanford. He currently serves as CEO of the Boston Celtics basketball team. Previously he worked in venture capital and was as an investor in many successful healthcare and medical technology companies.

On being elected chair of the Board, Wyc declared: "This institution is at the forefront of preventing and restoring vision and hearing loss, which is a personal mission of mine.... I am looking forward to supporting the efforts of the extraordinary vision and hearing researchers, educators, physicians, and patient care professionals of Mass. Eye and Ear."



**“It is an amazing feeling to support the dedicated people at Schepens Eye Research Institute who have fantastic dreams which, when realized, could change so many lives.”**



## DONOR PROFILE: CHARLES DE GUNZBURG

A personal experience with vision loss is what drives Charles de Gunzburg when it comes to supporting the work of the Schepens Eye Research. Retinal detachments in both eyes nearly blinded him, but his vision was restored by Dr. Charles Schepens. Since then he has maintained and nurtured a strong, supportive relationship with the Institute.

Mr. de Gunzburg is Chairman of First Spring Corporation, a private New York-based investment company, and a founder of FdG Associates, a leverage buyout firm. He has a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College and a Master’s degree in Public Administration from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Mr. de Gunzburg resides with his wife and family in New York City and Concord, MA.

In recent years, Mr. de Gunzburg has focused his energy and generosity on the regenerative medicine component of eye research, believing that for many struck by degenerative diseases, it holds the greatest promise of a cure. Reassured by this belief, he contributed substantial resources to create the Minda de Gunzburg Center for Retinal Transplantation Research. The center, now the Minda de Gunzburg Center for Ocular Regeneration, is dedicated to the development of therapies aimed at regenerating tissues of the eye that have been damaged by disease or trauma. One of the Institute’s most generous benefactors, he has also endowed the de Gunzburg Director of that center, a position held by Dr. Michael Young, a world leader in the use of stem cell and other tissue regenerating techniques to restore vision.

“Schepens scientists have already made enormous progress in this fledgling, fascinating field,” says Mr. de Gunzburg. “I was already a believer, but in the past few years, my commitment has grown even greater. It is an amazing feeling to support the dedicated people at Schepens Eye Research Institute who have fantastic dreams which, when realized could change so many lives,” he says.

A trustee of the Institute since 1986, he has also assumed leadership responsibilities for the Institute’s future by chairing the Nominations Committee to recruit board members sharing his commitment to advance vision research.



## DONOR PROFILE: FRED & INES YEATTS

### Generous support propels AMD research

For Fred and Ines Yeatts, research to develop new treatments for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is an interesting, exciting, and important means to an end. Long-time friends and supporters of hearing research at Mass. Eye and Ear, Fred and Ines recently extended their philanthropy to include a new partnership with Drs. Joan Miller, HMS ophthalmology chair, and Demetrios Vavvas, HMS Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology. Their support has seeded a highly innovative research program in neuroprotection, a burgeoning area of investigation that aims to rescue retinal cells that are at risk of dying, before they die, and potentially preserve vision in many retinal diseases.

“We enjoyed meeting Drs. Miller and Vavvas very much,” said Ines Yeatts. “They made us aware of just how complex and difficult it can be to hit every research milestone in their search for a cure. We were impressed by their energetic pursuit of the problems.”

Research at Mass. Eye and Ear is fueled with the help of thoughtful and generous individuals like the Yeatts. “Neuroprotection offers tremendous promise in many areas of medicine, and especially in preserving vision,” explained Dr. Miller. “This is an area that is very exciting to us and, with the Yeatts’ help, we’ve been able to dive into it and start to make progress in a short time. We could not be more appreciative of their keen interest in our work and their outstanding generosity.”

Fred Yeatts is an engineer who spent his career in the defense industry. Now retired, his passion for science continues ever strong through his interest in medical research. “We know that these are tough problems that will take a long time to solve,” said Fred. “We enjoy hearing about the obstacles and strategies and the victories, and we’re happy that we can play a role in advancing their efforts to find a cure for AMD.”



## DONOR PROFILE: DEWALT ANKENY

DeWalt (Pete) Ankeny’s commitment to eye research came to him as a legacy from his parents. It is a legacy that he has whole-heartedly embraced and one he hopes to pass on to the next generation. Building on that legacy, Pete has supported the Institute’s mission to cure blinding eye disease along with support from The Ankeny Foundation and the Ankeny Family Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation. In addition to his leadership at these foundations, Pete has also been a devoted member of the board of trustees of Schepens Eye Research Institute. His daughter, Sally Ankeny-Reiley, has taken up the cause in recent years, contributing as a member of the development and public relations committee at The Institute.

It all began in the late 1950s, when his father, DeWalt H. Ankeny, Sr., suffered two retinal detachments. At that time, detached retinas were not easily repaired and often resulted in blindness. He and Marie, his wife, sought the help of Dr. Charles Schepens, who was able to restore his vision with a new technique he developed at the Retina Foundation (the precursor to Schepens Eye Research Institute). Decades later, Marie also needed Dr. Schepens’ skill to reattach her retina. These experiences resulted in Marie’s great fondness for Dr. Schepens and forged her commitment to support the Institute and eye research. Not only did they endow the Institute’s DeWalt and Marie Ankeny Director of Research position but Marie’s sister, Theodora, also generously gave to the Institute through a charitable remainder trust.

Over the years, Pete, who had a distinguished career in banking and who is now at Meristem in Minnesota, has been dedicated to ensuring that the Foundations continue to meet the needs of the Institute’s mission. Through the two foundations, he has made sizable contributions to the building of new laboratories, the annual fund and the Center for Age-related Macular Degeneration Research at the Institute, even following closely in his parents’ footsteps to endow the Ankeny Scholar of Retinal Molecular Biology, held by Dr. Pat D’Amore. He continues to keep a close watch on the Institute’s progress, always remembering how its creative innovation helped save the sight of both of his parents.







## Life-changing surgery honors Ray Tye: a man who changed lives

Dr. Fay shares a happy moment with Andrea Nemethi. Dr. Fay is an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School and a surgeon in Mass. Eye and Ear's Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery Service. He specializes in Ophthalmic Oncology and is a founding member of the Mass. General Hospital Hemangioma and Vascular Malformations Clinic. His clinical interests focus on vascular lesions around the eye, such as hemangiomas, Sturge Weber syndrome, and port-wine stains. For many complex conditions faced by patients, Dr. Fay has performed innovative and life-changing solutions, including eyelid reconstruction, tear duct surgery, and laser therapies. Dr. Fay was recognized by the Vascular Birthmarks Foundation as Physician of the Year in 2007.

Twelve-year-old Andrea Nemethi smiles as she tries on eyeglasses inside Mass. Eye and Ear's Optical Shop. The fact that she can wear glasses at all is amazing; up until recently, Andrea had a tumor behind her right eye that had grown to the size of a grapefruit, destroying the eye and pushing it out of the socket. Doctors from her home country of Romania told her family that she had an inoperable tumor with just months to live. The tumor continued to grow for eight years with no help in sight—until the English teacher in her small, rural middle school searched the Internet, and through many connections found out about Mass. Eye and Ear.

The daughter of a retired pediatrician, the teacher was increasingly concerned with Andrea's right eyeball, which had become a huge bulge covering half of her face and stretching the eyelid almost to the point of bursting.

"According to the school doctor, in case of an unexpected turn for the worse, at school or elsewhere, we would be unable to do anything to assist her," wrote the teacher in an email to Mass. Eye and Ear's Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery Service. "The haunting possibility of such an evolution makes us desperate enough to try to look for assistance all over the world."

Dr. Aaron Fay, Director of Mass. Eye and Ear's Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Service, reviewed Andrea's case. Having helped many children with life-threatening facial tumors, Dr. Fay thought he could help. In a case involving an international child without funding, Mass. Eye and Ear would have immediately turned to the Ray Tye Medical Aid Foundation for assistance. "Ray Tye was a thoughtful man who led a meaningful life. He never missed a chance to help people, especially children," Dr. Fay explains. "When I saw the photos of this young Romanian girl, I thought of Ray. Helping this girl is exactly what Ray would have done."

Unfortunately, Mr. Tye was not to know of Andrea's situation, having passed away shortly before her case arose. The request for assistance came at a fortuitous moment, however. Camille Condon, Director of the

International Office at Mass. Eye and Ear, along with the institute's doctors and administrators, had been trying to think of a meaningful way to honor the memory of Ray Tye. "During his lifetime, Ray donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to help patients in need," says Camille. "Knowing that Ray would have jumped at the chance to help this courageous and strong young lady, the physicians volunteered their services in his honor."

Andrea and her father came to the United States in the summer of 2010, and the local Romanian community hosted the family. Dr. Fay and his team performed several surgeries—the first of which was a seven-hour operation to remove the tumor. Thankfully, the tumor was benign, and the team was able to preserve Andrea's eyelid and surrounding muscles. In subsequent surgeries, Dr. Fay rebuilt her eye socket and implanted an artificial eye—all of which have dramatically changed her appearance. A future surgery will further refine her eyelid.

These procedures changed the way she looks, but more importantly they have also changed her life. She has grown into a beautiful, self-confident young lady who enjoys being back in school, able to play with her classmates in the school yard without fear of injury. She can enjoy swimming and bicycling, activities that she could not do before. "This was an extremely emotional journey for all who were involved," Camille says. "Our only regret is that Ray Tye did not have the opportunity to meet Andrea." His widow, Eileen Tye, met Andrea and was touched by the experience. "Unlike an honor where you are handed a plaque or a bowl, this is an honor from the heart," Mrs. Tye remarked. "Ray would have loved helping Andrea. The two of them would have been great friends."

Andrea and her family are grateful for all the love and support they received, but mostly to the man they never had the chance to meet but who continues to help those in need. "He must have been a great man," says Andrea's father, Petru, through an interpreter. "With a big heart," Andrea adds.

## FOUNDATION PROFILES

The HMS Department of Ophthalmology is extremely grateful to its long-standing partners in vision research, including the Massachusetts Lions Clubs, Research to Prevent Blindness, and Foundation Fighting Blindness. Their stalwart and steady financial support enables the department to continue its mission of research, education and care on many fronts.

### Foundation Fighting Blindness

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) was established in 1971 by a passionate group of individuals who were driven to overcome vision-robbing retinal degenerative diseases that were affecting them or their loved ones.

Gordon Gund, FFB's chairman, co-founded the organization with the late Ben Berman. Mr. Gund, who is blind from retinitis pigmentosa, is chief executive officer of Gund Investment Corporation, and was the principal owner of the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers and co-founder and part owner of the San Jose Sharks. Mr. Berman was a real estate executive with two daughters affected by retinitis pigmentosa.

The Foundation's goal was clear: To drive the research that would lead to preventions, treatments, and cures for the entire spectrum of blinding retinal degenerative diseases—including macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa and Usher syndrome—that together affect more than 10 million Americans and millions more throughout the world. At the time of FFB's founding, very



little was known about these conditions. Today, thanks to the Foundation's efforts, much progress has been made in the effort to prevent or cure retinal degenerations.

Through private individual contributions, corporate philanthropy, and community-based fundraising activities, FFB has raised more than \$425 million since its inception. In addition to being the largest private funder of retinal research in the world, the organization also conducts a robust outreach program, and hosts symposia and conferences to raise public awareness of retinal degenerative diseases.

The Berman and Gund families met over forty years ago when both were seeking ways to foster research into discovering the causes of and treatments for retinal degenerative diseases. In 1974, the FFB provided funding for the Berman-Gund Laboratory at Mass. Eye and Ear, dedicated to investigating blinding retinal diseases. The Foundation also established the William F. Chatlos Professorship of Ophthalmology, which came about through the pivotal efforts of William Chatlos, a dedicated member of the FFB who has served in key leadership roles since the mid-70's (including Vice Chairman). Dr. Eliot L. Berson, regarded as one of the world's top retinal clinicians and researchers, has been Director of the Berman-Gund Laboratory since its inception, and has held the Chatlos Professorship since its creation in 1978. Under Dr. Berson's leadership, clinical and research teams in the Berman-Gund Laboratory have made critical discoveries about the etiology of blinding retinal diseases and treatments to slow their progression. Dr. Eric Pierce, who has served on the FFB's Scientific Advisory Board since 2003 and as chair since 2005, joined Mass. Eye and Ear and Dr. Berson as the Associate Director of the Berman-Gund Laboratory in 2011, further enhancing the relationships among these pre-eminent organizations.



### Lions Clubs International

Founded in 1917, the Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with nearly 1.35 million volunteer members in approximately 45,000 clubs throughout the world. The Lions aid in numerous philanthropic causes and are recognized particularly for their strong commitment and service to sight conservation. Today, through countless local and international efforts, Lions clubs donate over \$500 million and provide 71 million hours of service each year in the United States and worldwide. In 1925, the Lions Clubs began to focus efforts on the blind and visually impaired when Helen Keller, noted author and activist with both vision and hearing loss, challenged the Lions to be "Knights of the Blind." In 1952, eye research was voted to be the official project of the Massachusetts Lions, and six years later, the project was formally incorporated as the Massachusetts Lions Eye Research Fund, Inc. (MLERF). The origins of MLERF date back to the summer of 1950, when the plight of so-called "blind babies" or "retrolental fibroplasia babies" came to the attention of a Lions District Governor, E. Daniel Johnson. First discovered by a Massachusetts physician in 1941,

"The opportunity I bring to you, Lions, is this: To foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness; no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you Lions, you who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?"

Excerpted from Helen Keller's Challenge to the Lions, 1925 International Convention, Cedar Point, Ohio, June 30, 1925



the disease we now know as retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) was, at that time, afflicting four out of five premature babies weighing four pounds or less. The disease baffled the medical community, which had no dedicated resources for research. Several Lions members mobilized together with Al Hirshberg (Sports Writer for the Boston Post and Chairman of the Foundation for Eye Research) and Dr. Edwin B. Dunphy (Chief of Staff at Mass. Eye and Ear). The group produced and mailed a pamphlet telling this story to all Lions in Massachusetts, and to District Governors in the U.S. and Canada. In his accompanying cover letter, Mr. Johnson wrote a passionate call to action. “The attached leaflet tells briefly about the lack of research in the field of blindness,” the letter stated. Mr. Johnson went on to write, “it is unbelievable that so little money is spent on trying to prevent a malady...and I shudder to think that probably a child or grandchild of mine or yours might well be the victim of this.” The condition, which Mr. Johnson called “baby blindness” and noted to strike “rich and poor alike,” drove him to call for the underwriting of eye research. “It seems that this is a challenge to the Lions of Massachusetts, yes to the country!” he declared.

From 1951 to 2006, Massachusetts Lions raised and donated nearly \$26 million to eye research in Massachusetts. Several HMS ophthalmology affiliates—including Mass. Eye and Ear, Children’s Hospital Boston, Schepens Eye Research Institute, and Joslin Diabetes Center—have directly benefitted from this philanthropy. MLERF funds have provided critical financial support for numerous eye programs, outreach efforts, research initiatives, and technologies that have enabled many medical advances and helped tens of thousands of Massachusetts residents to avoid or mitigate vision loss. Today, Lions support remains steadfast and continues to drive our mission forward.

### Research to Prevent Blindness

For half a century, Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) has cultivated and sustained the careers of thousands of vision researchers whose highly innovative work has, in turn, propelled ophthalmic science forward and transformed millions of lives. Since its founding in 1960, RPB has awarded 3,381 research grants totaling more than \$290 million in research support to fund the invention of new technologies, test innovative concepts, and develop potential treatments. In 2010 alone, the organization funded 89 new grants and actively supported more than 151 scientists at 57 departments of ophthalmology at medical schools across the United States.

Since 1961, RPB has been a key foundation partner to the HMS Department of Ophthalmology. Funding provided by RPB to date tops \$6.97 million. Thanks to this generous and ongoing support, many major developments in eye research and treatment have come to fruition at Harvard Medical School. For example, RPB has consistently invested resources in the evolution of anti-VEGF investigations that have led to the development of intra-

vitreal drug treatments. Millions of patients have benefitted from these treatments, which can slow, halt, or sometimes reverse the effects of advanced age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Throughout this decades-long partnership, RPB support has driven innovative research across a broad range of subspecialty areas and scientific disciplines. RPB individual investigator awards have recognized the efforts of numerous HMS faculty at every career level; these include the Jules and Doris Stein RPB Professorships, RPB Walt and Lilly Disney Award for Amblyopia Research, RPB Career Development Awards, RPB Senior Scientific Investigator Awards, RPB Lew R. Wasserman Merit Awards, RPB Physician Scientist Awards, and RPB Special Scholar Awards.

Along with individual grants, RPB has provided significant unrestricted grant support to the department. During the last several years, this funding has helped to mobilize vigorous new initiatives to expand and enhance the department’s academic programs. The steady influx of RPB unrestricted grants also has enabled faculty to pursue new teaching initiatives and to hone HMS residency and fellowship programs. Significant funding also has provided for laboratory renovations and the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment.



## ALUMNI GIVING SOCIETY

### Seeding a Culture of Excellence

HMS Ophthalmology alumni know first-hand the importance of supporting the vital work of our trainees and faculty. Launched in 2010, the Alumni Giving Society of HMS Ophthalmology at Mass. Eye and Ear shines a light on their philanthropy by recognizing gifts of \$1,000 or more to the department within the fiscal year (October 1-September 30). In its first year, over 100 HMS alumni and current or former medical staff signed on; their generous donations totaled more than \$300,000. In year two, this generous philanthropy has intensified, with several inspirational gifts celebrated in this section.

The department extends its sincerest thanks to all Alumni Society Giving members—past, present and future—whose investments in our institution drive innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and success across every corner of the campus.

### Richard J. Simmons and Ruthanne B. Simmons Fellowship Fund

This gift was initiated by Dr. Richard Simmons, a 1957 graduate of Harvard Medical School who completed his ophthalmology residency at Mass. Eye and Ear in 1962. For four decades, Dr. Simmons enjoyed a career as a pre-eminent glaucoma specialist in Boston, first, as student and colleague of Mass. Eye and Ear luminaries, Drs. Paul Chandler and Morton Grant, and later, as the mentor of an entire generation of glaucoma specialists. He was President of the Professional Staff of Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, President of New England Ophthalmological Society (NEOS), one of the four Founders of the American Glaucoma Society, one of the four Founders of the Chandler Grant Glaucoma Society, author of more than 66 peer-reviewed papers, and author of numerous book chapters on glaucoma. Dr. Simmons taught intensively as a fellowship preceptor and as a frequent guest lecturer nationally and internationally.

Dr. Simmons’ daughter, Ruthanne Simmons, followed in her father’s footsteps. Thirty years after her father, she too, graduated from Harvard Medical School with her MD. Upon completion of her

residency and glaucoma fellowship at Duke University Medical Center, Ruthanne, joined her father in his ophthalmology practice. Later they practiced together at Ophthalmic Consultants of Boston. She operated at Mass. Eye and Ear and taught in the HMS Department of Ophthalmology. Like her father, Ruthanne was also active in many professional societies, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Glaucoma Society, NEOS, and others. She was an active researcher and author.

Tragically, Ruthanne Simmons’ journey was cut short. In 1996, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She stopped practice for a year to undergo aggressive treatment and successfully returned to active practice for four more years. Sadly, the cancer returned again, and this time, it overcame her. It was a great loss when Ruthanne passed away in 2002.

In honor of his daughter, Dr. Simmons began an effort to raise \$250,000 to create a Richard and Ruthanne Simmons Fellowship Fund at Harvard Medical School. He seeded the fund and personally gave \$135,000. Mass. Eye and Ear reached out to ask others to join in, and 46 colleagues and friends did just that, making generous gifts to bring the fund to the \$250,000 minimum threshold.

Income from the Simmons Fellowship Fund will provide partial fellowship support to a succession of Simmons Fellows in the Glaucoma Service at Mass. Eye and Ear and help to ensure well-trained specialists for decades to come.



Dr. Richard Simmons with his wife, Anne

**“...it is unbelievable that so little money is spent on trying to prevent a malady...and I shudder to think that probably a child or grandchild of mine or yours might well be the victim of this.” The condition, which Mr. Johnson called “baby blindness” and noted to strike “rich and poor alike,” drove him to call for the underwriting of eye research. “It seems that this is a challenge to the Lions of Massachusetts, yes to the country!”**

—E. Daniel Johnson



Pei-Fei Lee, MD

### Dr. Pei-Fei Lee Lectureship in Ophthalmology

Paul Lee, MD, JD received his medical degree from the University of Michigan in 1986 and his law degree from Columbia University that same year. He went on to complete his glaucoma fellowship at Mass. Eye and Ear in 1991. Today, he is Professor of Ophthalmology and Vice Chair of Ophthalmology at Duke University School of Medicine. Earlier this year, Dr. Lee honored the memory of his father with a pledge of \$50,000 to endow the Dr. Pei-Fei Lee Lectureship in Ophthalmology. The lectureship will be held biannually with first preference given to glaucoma-related topics.

Dr. Pei-Fei Lee, who passed away in 2009 at the age of 83, was a dedicated clinician scientist. His son notes that Mass. Eye and Ear held a special place in his father's heart. Dr. Pei-Fei Lee was Mass. Eye and Ear's first glaucoma fellow, and was mentored by two Mass. Eye and Ear luminaries, Drs. Paul Chandler and Morton Grant. According to his son, the late Dr. Lee "conveyed not only the thinking but also the importance of the principles and character of both his mentors." On a personal level, Dr. Lee felt in-

debted to Mass. Eye and Ear for the outstanding training and education he received during his fellowship. After he retired, the senior Dr. Lee devoted himself to building educational bridges between the U.S. and China. Dr. Paul Lee's gift not only commemorates his father's dedication to education, but will continue to advance the education of future ophthalmologists. The gift also holds special significance as the department seeks to build new international bridges—most recently in exploring an academic partnership with Shanghai Eye and Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital at Fudan University in China.

### The Abelson Family Fellowship in Cornea at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary

In 1974, Mark Abelson, MD arrived at HMS' Department of Ophthalmology to pursue a joint fellowship in cornea and external disease research at Mass. Eye and Ear and Schepens Eye Research Institute. Under the mentorship of Dr. Claes Dohlman,

and advisor Dr. Mathea Allansmith, he completed his fellowship two years later and joined Schepens Eye Research Institute in 1976. At Schepens, Dr. Abelson developed a passionate interest in ocular surface inflammation and allergy response—areas where little research was being done and funding from sponsoring industry and government agencies was scarce.

With Dr. Dohlman's encouragement, Dr. Abelson set out to build a clinical practice and a clinical research organization to develop therapies for allergy and ocular surface disease. He was extremely successful in both activities. The research organization, Ophthalmic Research Associates (Ora), has been involved in the development of over one-third of the world's currently marketed ophthalmic pharmaceutical products.

Throughout his career, Dr. Abelson has maintained his connection and support of Schepens, where he is currently a Senior Clinical Scientist and Trustee. In recent years, he has joined in HMS departmental activi-

ties more broadly—editing a section on pharmacology and contributing chapters for all three editions of Albert & Jakobiec's *Principles and Practice of Ophthalmology*. In addition, Dr. Abelson lectures at department meetings, and teaches HMS students. In 2011, he was promoted to Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School.

The Abelson family—including Dr. Abelson and his wife Annalee, their son Stuart (who now heads Ora and is a Trustee of Mass. Eye and Ear) and wife Kathryn, their son Richard and wife Mariana, and other Abelson family members—wanted to give back to Mass. Eye and Ear; they partnered with his mentor, Dr. Dohlman, to establish a fellowship fund at Mass. Eye and Ear. The Abelson family has pledged \$600,000, matched with \$600,000 from Mass. Eye and Ear from the proceeds of the Boston Keratoprosthesis, to create the Abelson Family Fellowship in Cornea at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

"This gift from the Abelson family is extraordinary on many levels," says Dr. Joan Miller, Chief and Chair of the HMS Department of Ophthalmology. "Dr. Abelson is a shining example of an HMS Ophthalmology fellow who has gone on to establish a prominent career in bench-to-bedside research. Not only is Dr. Abelson a quintessential clinician scientist, but his family has also perpetuated his far-reaching impact with their ongoing work. We are extremely proud of Dr. Abelson's achievements, and truly honored to carry on his legacy with the Abelson Family Fellowship in Cornea."

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—Joan W. Miller, MD



Left to Right: Joan W. Miller, MD; Mark Abelson, MD; and Claes Dohlman, MD, PhD.