Alumni Focus: Dr. Sean Mulqueeny

He is the ultimate over-achiever. Growing up in the shadow of the College of Optometry his journey took him and his passion for soccer to exceed expectations and play professionally. He continues to represent one of the College’s most recognizable and distinguished alumni via his successful practices – beginning with Morey-Mulqueeny Eye Institute – to his current practice Mulqueeny Eye Centers/SureVision, his partnerships with ophthalmology - first with Kirk Morey, MD, and currently with Lawrence Gans, MD - his ever-present voice on radio advertisements, his numerous leadership roles in the community and nationally, and his ever-positive, ever-welcoming personality that brightens the day of every person he meets. He is Dr. Sean Mulqueeny, UMSL Class of 1991.

Optometry was not his calling early in life. He studied business and computer sciences at Southern Illinois University (SIU). He attended SIU as a result of the opportunity to pursue his ever-increasing passion for soccer. SIU became a powerhouse in collegiate soccer and Sean’s team progressed all the way to the NCAA Final Four in 1982. With a full-ride soccer scholarship for four years at SIU, he also achieved All-American honors. He was offered the opportunity to play the game professionally via an invitation to a free-agent tryout for the St. Louis Steamers. He was one of only two out of 400 local, national, and international players to make the team.

So how did his journey travel toward optometry? He relates: “It was during my Steamer’s playing days that optometry came into my life. As a rookie on one of the best teams in the league, I was looking for any advantage I could find to help my career. It was during this time I realized my vision was slipping. Not having an eye exam in years, I searched for the best doctors in the region. I was fortunate to have an excellent facility in my own backyard. The College of Optometry was recently founded and it seemed a perfect avenue to address my visual concerns. It was because of that experience that I realized I’d found my true calling. My examination at the College of Optometry was a life-changing event.”

When Sean’s professional soccer career ended he completed his prerequisites for the College of Optometry and initiated his tenure at the College of Optometry in August, 1987 receiving his Doctor of Optometry degree four years later. He initiated his optometric career in a very prominent ophthalmological practice, Gordon-Hanish Eye Institute owned by Jim Gordon, MD. Ironically, he started in the practice at the same time his future partner, Lawrence Gans, MD was hired.

As with Dr. Scott Tomasino's hiring of Dr. Goerss in the last edition of the EyeWire, Dr. Gordon took a risk in that there was not a large patient population for Dr. Mulqueeny when he was initially hired. He managed this through...
becoming immersed in the practice, helping with marketing and taking every opportunity to see patients. “I’ve long considered my experience with this group as my residency… at a time when residencies were not as prevalent as they are now. My experience was an ocular version of the then popular TV show ‘ER’.

I covered call as much as possible. I also asked to cover every Saturday to get as many weekend emergency patients as possible. This proved to be an excellent way to build my patient base. I realized early I needed to create a niche to compete in a large ophthalmic practice. My first niche was specialty contact lens fittings. Keratoconics and PKs were very prevalent in this corneal practice and there was a need to have someone that could fit them.” However, Dr. Mulqueeny ultimately found his true niche and it resulted in his trailblazing efforts in establishing a partnership with ophthalmology as he relates: “My next niche followed the national (and international) trend with the advent and FDA approval of LASIK. Since we were known as a corneal practice, patients began to come to us once the word about this new procedure became public. I was identified as a thought leader in Refractive Surgery because of this early experience in LASIK. This led groups from around the country to seek my opinion on LASIK co-management and ultimately gave me the opportunity to form a new practice with a local ophthalmologist. We called this new business the Morey-Mulqueeny Eye Center. With the help of a rather large marketing budget, my partner and I built a LASIK practice from virtually nothing. It was one of the most rewarding things I’ve ever done. . . at its peak, we were performing hundreds of LASIK cases each month.” Ultimately, 10 years ago, he merged his practice with the practice of Dr. Gans and they have equal ownership of SureVision, a well-respected refractive surgery co-management practice. They currently have four locations with three optometrists and three ophthalmologists in Missouri and Illinois. Dr. Mulqueeny’s location (Mulqueeny Eye Center) is located in West County and his specific practice specializes in ocular pathology, with an emphasis on cornea and ocular surface disease, specialty contact lenses, and refractive surgery.

As no surprise to anyone who knows him, Sean has served as a youth soccer coach and his younger son Ryan, a sophomore at Priory High School, is an accomplished soccer player with a bright future ahead of him. Married to Lisa since 1989 (they met in kindergarten!), their older son Brendan is a sophomore at Texas Christian University who is contemplating a future career in medicine. In addition to being a frequent lecturer nationally and internationally in areas including glaucoma, ocular surface disease, cataract co-management, specialty contact lenses, refractive surgery, and allergies, he has held numerous leadership roles and positions. He is currently President of the MD-OD Contact Lens Foundation of St. Louis and is Past President of the St. Louis Optometric Society. He serves on the College of Optometry Leadership Council as well as Advisory Board of ZeaVision, and as Medical Director of the Dry Eye Institute of St. Louis. He is a Principal Investigator of both the PROOF study (Allergan), and the ONIT study (ZeaVision).

He credits his education at UMSL for his success in his chosen profession and he has reciprocated by being a desirable and educational clinical rotation site for fourth year clinical interns. “I came into my own academically at UMSL. I received both my BS, BA undergraduate degree and my Doctorate in Optometry from the institution. UMSL gave me the necessary tools to compete in both the optometric and business arenas. The business education helped me to think ‘outside of the box’. . . including owning a LASIK center and laser as an optometrist. I was asked by the College to add a rotation two years after I graduated. Acting as clinical faculty has allowed me to build a strong relationship with students from the College for almost 20 years now. One of the original reasons that I was attracted to Optometry was because it gave me the opportunity to teach; both patients and students alike. We now take students into my practice from both UM-St. Louis and from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry/Salus University. I find this portion of my practice very rewarding.” One of those students was Dr. Drew Biondo (’11) who, upon graduation, joined Mulqueeny Eye Center and enjoys the opportunity to work with Dr. Mulqueeny. “Sean has had a strong and positive impact on my young career. His magnetic personality and endless drive make him a great doctor and a great mentor, and I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from him.” Certainly the College of Optometry is rewarded every day by the efforts of one of it’s most prominent and outstanding graduates.
American Academy of Optometry President-Elect Visits UMSL

Brett Bence OD, FAAO President-Elect of the American Academy of Optometry visited the College of Optometry to provide a presentation to all interested students on May 2nd. Dr. Bence is a partner in Northwest Eye Surgeons in Seattle and presented on the benefits of being both a Student Fellow and a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry. In his presentation, attended by UMSL Student Fellows and student members and officers of the UMSL Student Chapter of the AAO, he reported that UMSL had one of the largest number of students receiving their Student Fellowship in Phoenix last year in a program that was just established by the Academy. He recognized the following group of Student Fellows: Robert Ensley, OD ('13), Vance Lewis ('14), Bhumika Patel ('15), Brigette Colley, OD ('13), Alaina Mudder ('14), Karla Hafford ('14), Emily Pike ('14), Jenna Nelson ('14), Kevin Hoang, OD ('13), and Ashley Gazella ('14). His presentation was followed by a presentation by Brad Byergo ('02), for the Student Association for Independent Optometry, and sponsored by Vision Source.

Staff Member Wins Second Award

Linda Stein, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Student Services, became the first College of Optometry staff member to win the Riverstars Employee of the Month award twice, and only the second UMSL campus-wide employee to be honored twice. She won the March, 2013 under the category “Good Work Ethic.” This award honors an UMSL Staff member for excellence in several different areas. Linda first won the award in September, 2008 in the category of “Excellent Teamwork.” According to Nick Palisch, Senior Academic Advisor in the Office of Student Services, Linda is highly deserving of this honor: “Linda’s work ethic is very student-centered and she will do whatever she can to assist our students and fellow staff members.” Congratulations to Linda for a well-deserved honor and bringing recognition to the College of Optometry.
Notables

• Congratulations to the following students for being selected to receive travel grants to Optometry’s Meeting in San Diego.
  • Emily Pike (‘14): Allergan Travel Grant Recipient
  • Kevin Hoang, OD (‘13): Allergan Travel Grant Recipient
  • Robert Ensley, OD (‘13): TVCI Travel Grant Recipient

• Matt Kauffman OD, UMSL Cornea and Contact Lens Resident authored an article entitled: “Transepithelial ‘epi-on’ corneal collagen cross-linking: A healthier approach” in the April issue of the AOA Contact Lens and Cornea Newsletter.

• Ed Bennett OD, MSEd was elected to the AOA Contact Lens and Cornea Section Council.

• A free health fair for older adults April 11 at the St. Alphonus Liguori “Rock” Catholic Church in St. Louis helped more than 100 people and was featured in the April 22nd edition of “UMSL DAILY”. College of Nursing and College of Optometry students performed the screenings which included blood pressure, diabetes, vision, and cholesterol. Emily Pike (‘14) was quoted in this article.

• Diane (Werkmeister) Wilson, OD (‘88), as a result of her mission work in Haiti, was featured in the March issue of Women in Optometry in an article entitled “Bringing Eye Care to Those in Need”. Owner of Arnold Eye Care in Arnold, MO, Dr. Wilson has not only made five mission trips to provide eye care in Haiti but has also provided eye care in Guatemala, Mexico, Columbia, and South America.

• Devin Sasser (‘15) authored an article entitled “The Missouri Optometric Association makes strides for optometry” in the Spring 2013 issue of “Foresight”.

• Carrie McDowell, OD (‘13), National Student Liaison for the College of Optometrists and Vision Development authored an article entitled: “Student Interest in Behavioral and Developmental Optometry” in the journal entitled Visual Performance Today.

• Alex Permann (‘15) made the national media, including USA Today, by making a half court shot (and two other shots) at halftime of the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) tournament, March 10th in St. Louis. For his successful efforts he was rewarded with two lifetime tickets to the Missouri Valley Conference basketball tournament and four VIP passes and a three day hotel stay for the 2014 MVC tournament.

• Karen Rosen, OD (‘84) was featured in the Spring, 2013 issue of UMSL Magazine. Co-owner with her husband, Steve Rosen OD, of Rosen Optometry in South St. Louis County, Dr. Rosen was a member of the first graduating class of the College. She has also participated in 19 international missions to developing countries to provide eye care.

• Dr. Tom Quinn presented his annual case grand rounds lecture on rigid gas permeable contact lenses sponsored by the GP Lens Institute on April 16th. This was followed by a workshop conducted by Dr. Quinn and the UMSL contact lens faculty.

• Joanna Gervais, OD (‘08) and husband Brian are the proud parents of Avery Maja, born August 14, 2012.

• Crews Colbert Dodd was born on November 19th, 2012. His father is Nick Dodd, OD (‘11). Here he is with his brother Daniel.

• Ivan Andrew Irwin was born to Casey and Sally Irwin, OD (‘08) on January 13, weighing 7lbs 12oz.

• Fannie Coleman, OD (‘09) gave birth to Clara Jade, born February 11th.

• Lisa Quick Keller, OD (‘04) and her husband Heath are the proud parents of Dylan Heath, born March 11th.

• Brigette Colley, OD (‘13) and husband Brandon are the proud parents of Olivia JoAnne, born on March 19th.

• Erin Hamilton, OD (‘07) and husband Justin are the proud parents of Micah David, born March 22nd.

• Jason Bechtoldt, OD (‘10) and his wife Jennifer are the proud parents of Grayson Elliott born April 20th.

• Derek Swader, OD (‘10) and his wife Kimberly are the proud parents of Caleb John, born April 24th.
Current and past UMSL students had a quite a presence at the Annual Heart of America Contact Lens and Primary Care Congress this past February in Kansas City. Five students, one of which was Dr. Christopher Putnam (Optometry graduate student), were each awarded scholarships at the Awards Luncheon during the HOA. Christopher Putnam, OD, Alex Permann, BS (Optometry student ‘15), Tim Holmes, DSc, and Carl Bassi, PhD presented a poster titled Comparison of Spatial vs. Temporal Fundus Photo Evaluation Techniques with Novice Clinicians. Dr. Putnam’s poster was selected as one of the top five posters at the conference.

The Class of 2012 had a reunion at the Heart. Pictured here with Dr. Ed Bennett and Dean Larry Davis are: (left to right) Drs. Patrick Stark, Eric Jerde, Toan Nguyen, Ashley Thill, Heidi Ensley, Courtney Gonzales, Tuesday Warner, Alan Wegener, Suzanne Lakamp, Andrew Plester, and Gabe Burton.

Pictured from left to right: Bill Hefner, O.D., M.Ed., F.A.A.O., Director HOACLS; Ryan Nicholas, Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry; Jason Koschmeder, Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry; Megan Kirkpatrick, Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry; James Thirion, Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry; Jessica Colpitt, Northeastern State University Oklahoma College of Optometry; Chris Putnam, UMSL; Brett King, O.D., F.A.A.O., President HOACLS

Dean Larry Davis with Ed Bellingrath, OD (‘94). Dr. Bellingrath has provided funding for an annual scholarship to a deserving optometry student.

Photo courtesy of Heart of America

Class of 2013 members at the reception: (front row): Drs. Jacqueline Gabbert and Angel Husher. (back row) Tyler Hanson, Rob Ensley, Steve Branstetter, Brandon Ridder, Lacey Feezel, Jake Hayward, Katie Volk, and Kevin Hoang.

Dean Larry Davis, Dr. Ed Bennett, and Dana Pinkston (‘15) at the UMSL College of Optometry booth

Class of 2015 students at the Annual College of Optometry reception: (from left) Aimee Miller, Kate Gettinger, Jenna Osseck, Brandi Enichsen, Emily Williams, Jerika Kirwan, and Pauline Bland
“Angel” on the Streets

By Nick Palisch

The sky was filled with puffy white clouds, a chilly northwest breeze, and temperatures only flirting with the lower 50s on a late April day—this angel was driving down a busy street in a popular St. Louis neighborhood when in the corner of her eye she noticed a small child running down the sidewalk chasing a dog.

With her own child in the back seat of the car she immediately noticed that something was not right with this situation. She began to follow the child as he was running down the street without a coat on this chilly April day—she followed. Keeping her distance she decided to call the police.

Several U-turns she kept her sight locked on this small toddler. As the young boy approached a busy intersection, he had no regard for the speeding cars and most of the passing cars had no second thought for this young child—he kept running.

She knew that the situation was getting worse—she had to take additional action. She again called police who were on the way—but she could not wait. She quickly put her car into park—jumped out of the car and ran to the child before he approached the busy intersection.

The 4-year-old boy managed to sneak out of his grandfather’s house and wandered nearly a half mile and what seemed like eternity to this unsung hero—was about a 30 minute ordeal. Police were able to find the young boy’s grandfather’s home about a block away from where the child was found.

Dr. Angel Novel Simmons was out running errands on this very day and never thought that she would encounter a situation like she did—but that is what makes unsung heroes or in this case, “Angel” in training so remarkable.

While it was not her child, Simmons didn’t care—this young

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As Eye See It

By Nick Palisch

Have you ever walked into an auditorium before the graduates and just sit and stare at the stage—just for a moment. The empty auditorium awaits the pomp and circumstance as the soon to be graduating class walks across the stage to become doctors.

Remember that graduation is merely a concept and in real life every day you graduate. Dr. Seuss said it best in his book, Oh The Places You Will Go, “You’re off to Great Places! You’re off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who’ll decide where to go. It’s opener there in the wide open air. Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and foootsy as you. And when things start to happen, don’t worry. Don’t stew. Just go right along. You’ll start happening too. OH! THE PLACES YOU’LL GO!”

mates and even take a moment to learn from them about experiences they encountered over the last four years of school. Serve as a mentor to them—reach out and share a cup of coffee or a beer—just know this new class is where you once stood and they now have to take the education and put it into action and without a doubt a little fear exists on what the next step is in their professional career.

Dr. Seuss said it best in his book, Oh The Places You Will Go, “You’re off to Great Places! You’re off and away! You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who’ll decide where to go. It’s opener there in the wide open air. Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and foootsy as you. And when things start to happen, don’t worry. Don’t stew. Just go right along. You’ll start happening too. OH! THE PLACES YOU’LL GO!”
UMSL Christian Rock Band Continues to Entertain, Inspire and Serve Others

The College of Optometry Christian rock band “Power Cross” continues to provide exceptional music at events throughout the area. In February, they provided a charity concert, presented by the UMSL Fellowship of Christian Optometrists (FCO) to interested students at the Marillac Auditorium. With the assistance of volunteers from FCO, this concert was able to raise almost $400 to fund students participating in UMSL Student Volunteers to Optometry Services to Humanity (SVOSH) mission trips.

Power Cross is a band of current second-year optometry students that started this band to initially perform at weekly FCO meetings. The band consists of Aaron Peterson, Daniel Ethakoti, Amy Walsh, Dustin Hetke, and Greg Steimel. As mentioned in the Winter, 2012 EyeWire, band member Aaron Peterson relates how the name was derived: “We thought it made sense to name our band Power Cross because we are optometrists and our goal is, not only to correct refractive errors using lenses, but also help broken people, lost souls to come to know the power of the cross of Christ which can fix all of the problems in the world.”

Their influence has spread to the community and they continue to perform and bring positive recognition to the College of Optometry. According to dedicated FCO President Emily Heard (’15): “Power Cross is a non-audition group of students who congregate to prepare worship music for the student members of the UMSL–Fellowship of Christian Optometrists. This group reaches out to the community and beyond, holding local shows at UMSL and churches to raise money for charity. Power Cross has accumulated funds for UMSL-SVOSH Chapter and an orphanage in India thus far.”

“Angel” on the Streets
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boy was a child and as a proud parent of two children she did not think twice about doing what she needed in an effort to make sure the child was safe.

Dr. Simmons will likely never know his name, meet the family, or ever receive an award of hero-ism. The child never knew the harm that could have come to him and he will likely never remember the events of this day, but what Angel did on this day is not short of a heroic event. We can all agree she cared for him—just like one of her children, patients, and students.

EyeWire Going Digital!

Please update your email address for our records and send to: Janice.White@umsl.edu or PalischN@umsl.edu

Don’t miss out on the next issue!
Jennifer Sidun

Jennifer Sidun, OD (‘13) was featured in the Spring, 2013 issue of UMSL Magazine. She was also featured in the April issue of the AOA News. In the latter article she was pictured receiving the AOA Keyperson of the Year Award (with current AOSA President James Deom) from AOA Immediate Past President Dori Carlson. Under Jen's leadership students made a record amount of AOA-PAC donations in 2012 and garnered the largest participation ever in the 2012 Congressional Conference – nearly 400 students. The results were so overwhelming that for the first time, the AOA-PAC Keyperson of the Year Award was presented to the AOSA. This is also a compliment to the entire UMSL College of Optometry student body as UMSL had the highest percentage of students of any College of Optometry in the country at Optometry’s Meeting in both 2011 and 2012.

Jennifer Sidun, OD (‘13)