Message from the Dean

A Generous Thank You

“The mission of the College of Optometry is to promote and provide improved eye and health care...”

Greetings! In order for us to passionately pursue that high calling set forth within the College vision, mission and values statements, we depend upon the relationships with and support of others who share that desire. Fortunately, many within our community not only recognize the tremendous unmet need for eye care but also respond to that reality through their monetary and in-kind support. In this issue of the EyeWire you will see testimony of that commitment which was exhibited during the Sight For St. Louis. The individual and collective response for the event -- from those who served on the planning committee, to the donors and sponsors, to those who prepared the venue, to those who were in attendance -- was nothing short of generous. To each of you, sincere thanks are directed your way. Know that your generosity is appreciated even more by those who will now see the world a little more clearly.

Additional examples of that charitable spirit follow. Generosity provides a lasting positive impact for the giver as well as the beneficiary. It is an honor to be among so many in a community of professionals who have learned that along the way!

Best Regards,

ljdavis@umsl.edu

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. 
Winston Churchill

Sight for St. Louis

Sight for St. Louis, a silent and live auction, including entertainment, was held on March 23, 2006, in the beautiful Blanche Touhill Performing Arts Center on the UMSL campus. This year, through Sight for St. Louis, alumni and friends helped the college raise money to begin the endowment of a fund to help our low-income patients in perpetuity.

More than 12,000 patient contacts are made annually in the various Centers for Eye Care operated by the College of Optometry. These include the University Eye Center, Optometric Center, East St. Louis Center, the Mobile Examination Vehicle (at schools and nursing homes), four St. Louis Regional Community Health Centers, and neighborhood clinics, such as La Clinica. However, not all of our patients in need have insurance; many do not earn above the poverty level despite working several jobs. These patients are referred by social workers and other case workers to our clinics for help.

Sight for St. Louis items auctioned live included vacations in Venice, Florida; Vail, Colorado; and St. Maarten, as well as tickets to the Regis and Kelly show. The silent auction offered sought-after items including a BBQ Basket, and tickets to various St. Louis sporting events. The event raised $23,000; $20,000 earmarked for the endowment fund and $3,000 to help patients over the next year.

If you missed this wonderful and worthwhile event, but would like to help our patients, please send your donation to Barb Brown, OD '88, Optometry/331 MH, UMSL, One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121-4400. Please make your check payable to UMSL, and please note on the subject line “Sight for St. Louis”. If your prefer that your gift directly support the endowment, add “Endow”, or if you prefer your gift to support patients this year, please add “Annual”. Every dollar helps; $75 means a patient receives glasses, and $105 dollars provides a comprehensive examination and eye glasses. Please help if you can.
The class of 2010 is participating in a On-Line Community for incoming students. The On-Line Community permits them to receive pertinent information from the university, such as housing options, and to send and receive e-mails to communicate with others in their entering class. It is hoped that the students will have a sense of community before they meet or begin classes next fall.

Edward Bennett, OD, and Vengu Lakshminarayanan, PhD, authored two books, Review Questions for the NBEO Examination, Part One, and Review Questions for the NBEO Examination, Part Two, both published by Elsevier Publications, both with a CD-ROM.

Larry Davis, OD was co-author of an article entitled “Longitudinal Changes in Visual Acuity in Keratoconus” which reported results from the Collaborative Longitudinal Evaluation of Keratoconus (CLEK) study. The article was published in the February 2006 issue of Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science.


Vengu Lakshminarayanan, PhD, has been appointed a member-at-large of the U.S. Liaison Committee for the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics. The Committee’s charge is to promote the advancement of physics in the United States and throughout the world.

The sixth annual UMSL Continuing Education in Las Vegas was offered March 1-3, 2006, featuring Lou Catania, OD, John McGreal, OD and Leonard Naeger, PhD. Over one-hundred ODs from across the country attended.

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Lee Ann Barrett, OD ’85, Receives Optometrist of the Year Award

Lee Ann Barrett, OD ’85, was presented with the Heart of America Contact Lens Society’s Optometrist of the Year award at the awards luncheon at the HOACLs annual congress. Barrett received the UM-St. Louis Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1999. She has been involved in leadership roles for optometry on the state, regional and national levels. In 2000, she was elected Missouri Optometric Association President and served on various MOA committees from 1994 to the present. In 2002, she was named the OD of the Year by the MOA. She was President of the North Central States Optometric Council in 2003. Barrett has been a member of various AOA Committees from 2002 to the present and is currently campaigning to be elected AOA Trustee in June, 2006. Congratulations, Lee Ann!

Scenes From HOACL 2006

February 11, 2006, Dean Larry Davis, OD, and Ellen Weiss, OD ’92, were elected to the Board of Directors of the Heart of America Contact Lens Association at the organization’s annual meeting. Each has been elected to a two-year term; Davis as Director of Arrangements, and Weiss as Director of Exhibits.

February 11, 2006, at the Awards Luncheon at the HOACL annual congress in Kansas City, MO, Kyle Dohm, ’06, was awarded a $2,000 scholarship. Pictured above are Norman Hinkle, OD, President; Courtney Goetsch, PUC; Kyle Dohm, UMSL; Justin Hart, NSU; Marissa Krug, UH; and Mike Todd, OD, Past President.

NEWS & NOTES

Wesley, OD ’03, and Mrs. Jennifer Kinerk and big sister Liz welcomed Tod William Kinerk into their family December 2005. Wesley is serving another tour of duty in the Air Force and will be stationed at Misawa Air Base in Misawa, Japan.

Tim Wingert, OD, and his wife Terri, both lost encounters with the icy sidewalks of Poznan, Poland. Wingert is in Poland as part of his Fulbright Scholarship. His cast has been removed, but his wife has some time remaining with hers. Their two children, Molly and John are also with them, but are unscathed.
Join the “Each One Reach One” Career Corps

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has initiated the “Each One Reach One” (EORO) campaign. The campaign is a practitioner-based, career promotion effort that encourages ODs to talk to their patients and other academically-gifted young people about optometry as a career choice.

The goal of the “Each One Reach One” program is to increase optometry’s national applicant pool to three applicants for each first-year position, and to develop an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of America’s population. The majority of students in the schools and colleges of optometry indicate that their decision to select optometry was due to the encouragement of individual optometrists. You are optometry’s most effective advocates—your enthusiasm and commitment to the profession will encourage students to choose optometry as a career.

Please note that this program is not about increasing the number of optometry graduates, it is about ensuring that the profession continues to attract bright and caring young people.

Become a part of the EORO corps by going to the ASCO website, www.opted.org, and clicking on Career Promotion Corps, or by contacting Victoria Smith-Moore at ASCO: vsmithmoore@opted.org.


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If you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically, please email Dr. Christensen and provide your email address. Thanks! (If we already have your email address there is no need to re-submit it.)

Here at EYewire Central, we were so anxious for spring that we dated the last issue as the "Spring" issue when it was actually the “Winter” one. That’s why you’re receiving this “Spring Extra”. Enjoy!
Hurricane Katrina Hits College of Optometry

(Desarae Bonds, '07, describes in her own words her family's encounter with Katrina.)

On Sunday August 28, 2005 I turned on the weather channel and saw that Hurricane Katrina was headed for New Orleans. My family has had to evacuate for the last few years, but New Orleans was always spared. I called my family and asked if they would evacuate again this year. There was only one working vehicle at my parent’s home and eleven people were there at the time. My oldest sister, Dana and her three kids left first with a friend. The remaining seven traveled in one car to my grandmother’s home in McComb, Mississippi. The first call I received Sunday night was from my sister Dana. She and her kids were in a shelter near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. My remaining family members’ trip to McComb took eight hours which is four times the usual travel time.

The storm made landfall in Louisiana on Monday August 29, I was unable to contact my family due to the phone lines being down. I worried about their safety the entire day. On Tuesday August 30, I woke up to the news that 80% of New Orleans was under water. At that moment, I knew our lives would change forever. I spent most of that day glued to the television screen watching countless devastating images. The images of the starving children were extremely heartbreaking and reminded me of my own daughter. She was about to begin kindergarten in Louisiana the week of the hurricane, but she was now in McComb with my parents. What if she had been one of those kids on my television screen? At one point, someone had suggested that my family evacuate to the Superdome, but they refused due mostly to my autistic brother’s needs. After seeing the images of the Superdome, I was relieved that my family traveled away from the city. My aunt in Chicago called to ask me about the locations of several family members, and I had no answers. I had yet to hear from anyone. My sister, Dana called Tuesday night from a pay phone in Baton Rouge. She was crying because she and her kids had left the shelter and they were now on the streets. I spent the rest of that night worried about their safety.

When I attended school the next day, all I could think about was my family. A few of my classmates suggested that I go home, but I told them I just wanted to get through that day. As I walked away from them, I began to cry. The anxiety was really taking a toll on me at that point. I went home during my break, and Dana called. She and her kids were now at a church in Baton Rouge. My aunt in Chicago called to say that another aunt of mine had broken her hip while trying to evacuate her flooded home, and she was transported to a hospital in Morgan City, Louisiana. All of my other family members were unaccounted for. I was finally able to contact my family in McComb. My mother informed me that she was unaware of
whether or not my oldest brother, Cordell had evacuated because no one had heard from him since the day before the storm. According to news reports, no one would be allowed back into New Orleans for several weeks, so I made plans to bring my family to St. Louis that weekend. Dr. Barbara Brown called to ask if my family was safe, and I explained the situation to her. She offered to help fund my trip to McComb and informed the faculty, staff, and students of my situation.

I arrived in McComb on Sunday September 4, 2005. The effects of the hurricane were evident there. Cars lined the streets waiting at the gas stations, and there was debris everywhere. My family traveled back to our home to salvage anything that we could. When we arrived at our home, the first thing we saw was that the roof of our porch had collapsed. There was no power in the neighborhood, so most of the neighbors who had stayed were on their front porches. The neighbors informed us that our roof had collapsed onto the porch days after the hurricane. It is very likely that if my family had not evacuated, they would have been sitting on the porch at the time of the collapse. This thought haunts me to this day. It was difficult for me to watch my family gather up a few belongings and leave our home forever. There were no moving trucks available in the city, so we gathered what we could into a van. My father decided to remain in McComb with my autistic brother because an apartment would not be suitable for my brother’s behavior. My sister Dana decided to remain at the Baton Rouge church because she was told that she would receive housing. My sister, Kendra had a two week old baby girl, and we left for St. Louis without her ever receiving a birth certificate for her daughter.

We arrived in St. Louis on September 6, and my family visited the Red Cross and Catholic Charities for assistance. There were now seven people in my two bedroom apartment. I placed a message for my oldest brother on television on September 8, and we went days without any response. I finally found out through a FEMA representative that my brother had applied for assistance, and she gave me his contact number. All of my other family members were accounted for soon after. On September 20, Dana and her family arrived in St. Louis. They had not received any housing assistance in Louisiana. There were now twelve people in my two bedroom apartment. My mother left that same night to return to McComb because my father could no longer care for my brother alone.

My sisters received housing vouchers from The North East Community Action Center (NECAC) in St. Charles County at the end of September. My parents were informed through a phone call that their landlord in Louisiana had decided to sell the property because of the extensive damage. He allowed the neighbors to take several of my family’s belongings, and he threw out the remaining items. It was official; my family had nothing. My parents realized that they could no longer live in McComb with my grandmother so they arrived in St. Louis in mid October. They received a housing voucher from NECAC as well. Currently, six family members live in Wentzville, MO and five live in O’Fallon, MO. My oldest brother is the only member of my immediate family who still lives in Louisiana. My family has received donations from The University of Missouri College of Optometry, the Red Cross, The United Way, the Salvation Army and a few local churches. Since they were only able to salvage a few personal items from home, they all had to start from scratch. My parents and brother were the last ones to receive beds about two weeks ago. Up until then, they were sleeping on air mattresses donated to me by The Bedroom Store. Dana’s kids love their new school in O’Fallon, and everyone has been hospitable. Kendra’s daughter will be eight months old this month, and she will finally receive her birth certificate next week. My family has no plans to return to Louisiana at the moment. Their housing in St. Charles County has been approved until September 2006. We have no idea what will happen after that date. From what we have heard, things are still very grim back home. Monthly rent has nearly doubled on most units, and the areas surrounding New Orleans are overpopulated. There are only a few stores open, and all of them close early in the evening. I don’t think the city will ever be the same. I had always planned to return home to Louisiana to practice optometry, but I am uncertain of where I will end up. We are dealing with the aftermath one day at a time. This is not the first time that my family has had to struggle, so I know that whatever happens, we will make it through.

(If you would like to help the Bonds’ family, please send your donation to Barbara W. Brown, OD ’88, College of Optometry/331 MH, UMSL, One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO, 63121-4400. Please make your check payable to Desarae Bonds.)