

# NEWSIGHT



**FLORIDA LIONS  
EYE BANK**  
SINCE 1962  
*Restoring the Beauty of Sight*

*Spring 2020*



*Director of  
Business  
& Project  
Development  
William Buras,  
left, and  
Executive  
Director  
Elizabeth Fout,  
right, at LV  
Prasad Eye  
Institute in  
Hyderabad,  
India.*

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Thank you to our financial supporters!

## Florida Lions Eye Bank Visits Eye Hospital in India

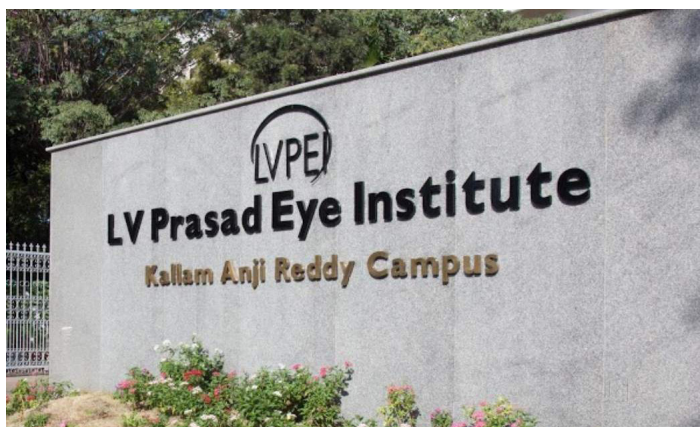
*In January 2020*, Florida Lions Eye Bank Executive Director, Elizabeth Fout, and Director of Business and Project Development, William Buras, traveled to Hyderabad, India to visit LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) and the Ramayamma International Eye Bank (RIEB). Like Florida Lions Eye Bank, located in Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, RIEB is a hospital-based eye bank, located in LV Prasad Eye Institute.

LV Prasad Eye Institute, located in southern India's Telangana state, is a comprehensive eye health facility endorsed by the World Health Organization. LVPEI is named for the renowned Indian filmmaker Sri Akkineni Lakshmi Vara Prasad Rao, popularly known as LV Prasad, who provided land and funding for the creation of the institute in 1987. To date, LVPEI has served over 28 million people, and provides more than 50% of its services at no cost to patients, regardless of complexity. LVPEI has made an immeasurable impact on India and the world.

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# Florida Lions Eye Bank Visits LV Prasad Eye Institute

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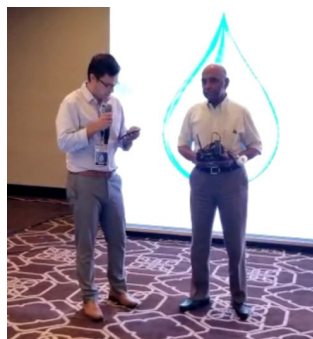


While at LVPEI, Fout and Buras toured RIEB, the largest provider of sight-restoring corneas in India. Since its inception in 1989, RIEB has recovered over 76,000 corneas, and distributed more than 40,600 corneas for transplantation. Fout and Buras also visited the operating room at LVPEI, where they were able to observe surgeons performing simple limbal endothelial transplantation, or SLET. Developed at LVPEI, SLET is a surgical technique used to treat unilateral limbal stem cell deficiency. The technique involves taking stem cells from the patient's unaffected eye to treat the diseased eye. SLET is currently performed by surgeons across the globe to treat unilateral ocular surface disease, but new techniques are being explored to improve outcomes and to treat patients with bilateral stem cell deficiency, who cannot be treated with SLET.

One of the highlights of Fout and Buras's trip was visiting the LVPEI GMP facility, where the institute is leading the way in developing these future treatments, including the isolation and culturing of mesenchymal stem cells to treat bilateral stem cell deficiency. Mesenchymal stem cells are stem cells of human origin that can differentiate into various cell types, including cells that can help treat ocular diseases, disorders, and injuries. GMP, or good manufacturing practices, is a system of production ensuring that products, such as biological and pharmaceutical goods, are consistently produced and controlled according to established quality standards.

Fout and Buras's trip to India coincided with OSW 2020, an annual meeting taking place at LV Prasad Eye Institute. OSW, or Ocular Surface Workshop, is a focused, intensive, and interactive meeting for cornea specialists interested in ocular surface disease and its management. During the meeting, Fout and Buras were present as Bascom Palmer Eye Institute faculty member Guillermo Amescua, MD, presented LV Prasad Eye Institute with a Photodynamic Therapy machine. This machine, used to treat patients with severe corneal infections, was developed with funding by Florida Lions Eye Bank and was featured in the Eye Bank's 2017 Annual Report. Sharing this technology with LVPEI will allow for the treatment of hundreds of patients in India suffering from severe corneal infections.

Florida Lions Eye Bank is honored by the invitation to visit India as guests of LV Prasad Eye Institute. We hope to continue collaborating and innovating in partnership with LV Prasad Eye Institute and the Ramayamma International Eye Bank.



*Left: Dr. Guillermo Amescua presents Dr. Gullapalli N. Rao with a Photodynamic Therapy machine to help treat patients at LVPEI.*

*Below: A mural at LVPEI honors the thousands of patients treated at this world-renowned facility.*



# Corneal Transplant Recipients Meet at Florida Lions Eye Bank

*In our past publications*, readers met two remarkable corneal transplant recipients, Krissy Kissoon and Nolan Bourgeios. Both patients have had complicated eye problems. Nolan experienced a corneal infection so severe he had to wait years before his eye was stable enough for a corneal transplant. Krissy has endured numerous eye surgeries, including three corneal transplants. Florida Lions Eye Bank provided the tissue for Nolan and Krissy's corneal transplants, and both patients had their procedures performed at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami.

By an incredible stroke of luck, both Nolan and Krissy visited Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Florida Lions Eye Bank's home since 1962, on the same day in November 2019. We couldn't pass up the opportunity to say hello, get some updates on their lives, and take some pictures! Plus, November is Eye Donation Month. We can't think of a better way to highlight the importance of eye donation than to share the stories of two inspiring corneal transplant recipients.

Krissy was happy to report that she planned to resume driving and return to work after a three-year absence caused by her eye problems. In January of 2020, Krissy was cleared by her doctor to resume her role as an Operational Quality Assurance Auditor at an energy company in Trinidad and Tobago. Thanks to her improved vision, Krissy is able to spend more time with her young son, Zidan, as well. She especially enjoys the outdoor activities she's once again able to do with her son, such as going to the beach, playing football, and playing golf. Krissy stated, "Everything is great so far, and I've readjusted very well. I've become so much more independent!"

Krissy also told us that since she was featured in Florida Lions Eye Bank's previous newsletter, she has met other corneal transplant recipients and people suffering from corneal disorders and other eye problems. She has embraced her role as a mentor for others facing corneal transplantation. Krissy explained, "People [with corneal disease] have asked to meet me and chat, so they can have some idea of what corneal transplants are about, and get encouragement to have their surgeries done. I've met so many people and shared my experience with them." Krissy added, "Every day I thank God that I can wake up and see the world again." We're thrilled Krissy is doing well!

Nolan continues to manage Corneal Transplant Support Group, a discussion group on Facebook by and for corneal transplant recipients. This patient-oriented group has nearly 2,500 members from over 100 countries around the world. Pre- and post-corneal transplant recipients, and their loved ones and caregivers are invited to join. Membership has grown by 70% over the past year, an increase Nolan credits in part to being featured in Florida Lions Eye Bank's previous Annual Report.

*(continued on back cover)*





# Eye Donor Profile: Honoring

*Dylan Frederick Thomas Hopp* passed away suddenly in 2019 at the age of 25. He donated his corneas to Florida Lions Eye Bank, and his donation restored sight to two people. His mother, Kimberly Hopp, graciously agreed to share her son's story with Florida Lions Eye Bank's community.

Like many family members of our eye donors, Kimberly would love to hear from the people who received her son's corneas. If you're a corneal transplant recipient, and you're considering reaching out to your donor's family, contact Florida Lions Eye Bank for support and guidance. We know this can be an emotional process, and we would be more than happy to help you. Email [info@fleb.org](mailto:info@fleb.org) for information on how to get started.

My son and only child, Dylan Frederick Thomas Hopp, was born on July 16, 1993. My birthday is on July 12, so he was my birthday gift. Throughout his life, we always celebrated our birthdays together. Dylan was born in Clearwater, Florida. When he was a baby, we moved to North Carolina for a few years, and returned to our hometown when Dylan was 5.

I was a young single mother, and it wasn't easy by any means. We had our struggles, but Dylan and I were always a team, and we came through good times and bad together. He was an amazing child, a blessing from the day he was born. He had a contagious smile and adorable dimples, and he could turn a bad day around just by smiling at me. Dylan could be sarcastic, and he definitely knew how to push my buttons, but he was always very loving. He had such a sentimental side, which I miss terribly. He could make a grown



man cry with the cards he wrote. There wasn't a time I didn't cry when I received a card from my son.

As a young man, Dylan was very active and athletic, with a competitive streak. He enjoyed golfing, fishing, boating, playing pool, boxing, and shooting. Dylan stayed out of trouble and got excellent grades in school. He was an incredibly hard worker who liked achieving things on his own. When he wanted something, he worked for it, and seldom asked for help. In September of 2018 he bought his dream car, a 2 Series BMW. God was a big part of Dylan's life: he showed respect and grace to everyone he met. He was outgoing, intelligent, and independent.

My son was extremely supportive of his family and friends. Growing up, Dylan acted like a big brother to a girl named Carlie, the daughter of some family friends. Carlie's mother wasn't involved in her life, and like Dylan, she grew up with-



# Dylan Frederick Thomas Hopp

out siblings. Their relationship was very special. Dylan also loved playing sports and video games with his nieces and nephew and helping them with school projects. He also loved spending time with his cousins, with whom he had a close relationship. As a young man, Dylan connected with his half siblings on his father's side. They are devastated by his death, because the relationship they formed with Dylan during these last few years was very strong.

There's one story that comes to mind that speaks volumes about my son's character. In his early 20s, Dylan lived in Orlando, about two hours away from his friends. Most of his friends had children who adored Dylan. Once, Dylan was on the phone with one of his buddies, a guy who with small children who worked as a sheriff. This friend mentioned that his wife was running late and wouldn't be home before he had to leave for work. So Dylan made the two hour trip to his friend's house to watch his kids so his buddy wouldn't be late for work and his kids wouldn't be left alone. To me, this says everything about Dylan's amazing heart.

As Dylan got older, he suffered from headaches. He saw several doctors, went through various tests, and was diagnosed with migraines. I have migraines as well, so I know what it's like to live with this disorder. As always, we worked through his diagnosis as a team, and I knew we would get through it together. When Dylan was 25, the unthinkable happened: he passed away suddenly from a ruptured brain aneurysm. Despite all the tests he'd had for migraines,



doctors hadn't caught the aneurysm. It was an unexpected tragedy, because my son was so young, healthy, and active. He had just finished a 90-hour work week and was enjoying a vacation in Southwest Florida. Tragically, he never made it home.

Because of the incredible person Dylan was, he never would have hesitated to help anyone in need. When he passed away, Dylan donated his eyes to restore sight to two people, as well as his heart, lungs, kidneys and liver. I always thought my son was special, but after his death, so many people reached out to tell me how he had touched their lives in many positive ways. It was moving to learn that others saw Dylan the same way I did. Somewhere in the world are people who never met Dylan, but who also know how special he was: the people who received the gift of sight from his cornea donation, and the gift of life from his organ donation. I miss my son so much, but I am comforted in knowing that he gave life, and sight, to others.



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*Opposite page left: Dylan as a little boy.*

*Opposite page right: Dylan with his mother, Kimberly.*

*This page left: Dylan with his car.*

*This page right: Dylan enjoying one of his hobbies.*

*All images provided courtesy of Kimberly Hopp.*

# Florida Lions Eye Bank Offers Professional Education at AAO Meeting

*In October 2019*, Florida Lions Eye Bank teamed up with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI) to offer lectures and wet labs at the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) Meeting in San Francisco, California. This meeting, a four-day annual conference, is one of the largest and most important ophthalmic meetings in the world. 2019's event was attended by nearly 23,000 ophthalmology professionals from across the globe.



One of Florida Lions Eye Bank's core missions is professional medical education. To that end, we were honored to offer, in cooperation with BPEI, professional medical education programming to AAO meeting attendees. At our shared booth with BPEI, we conducted a series of lectures, as well as 9 wet labs—that is, hands-on practice sessions of corneal surgery techniques—over 3 days of the meeting.

Over 650 physicians and medical professionals visited the booth to attend a lecture or participate in a wet lab offered by Florida Lions Eye Bank and BPEI. These participants hailed from 68 different countries around the world. Fifteen lectures were

taught by world-renowned BPEI faculty or alumni on topics ranging from Gene Therapy for Inherited Retinal Degeneration to Surgical Management of Corneal Scars.

The wet labs focused on teaching DMEK and DALK surgical techniques, two types of corneal transplants in which a very thin layer of a donor cornea is transplanted. Each wet lab included lecture and instruction by a Bascom Palmer Eye Institute faculty member, alumnus, or industry leader, and was followed by one hour of hands-on practice using human corneal grafts.

Florida Lions Eye Bank is thankful to have had the opportunity to educate ophthalmologists and others about new advances in corneal surgery. We are also deeply grateful to our eye donors, who made these wet labs possible through the gift of eye donation.



*Left: BPEI faculty member, Dr. Kendall Donaldson, leads a wet lab entitled "Trials and Tribulations of Transitioning to DMEK."*

*Above: BPEI faculty member, David Greenfield presents a lecture to attendees entitled "Emerging Breakthroughs in Glaucoma."*





# Thank You to Our Financial Supporters!

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Florida Lions Eye Bank  
900 NW 17<sup>th</sup> Street # 348  
Miami, FL 33136

(305) 326-6359  
www.fleb.org

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## Recipient Reunion at Florida Lions Eye Bank

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Recently, Nolan has had cataract surgery to replace the clouded lens in his transplant eye. He describes his vision as “pretty good,” an achievement considering the severity of the infection he battled for years. Nolan is looking forward to his next appointment at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, where he hopes to receive a new prescription for eyeglasses to fine-tune his vision to near perfect.

In early 2020, Nolan appeared on TV for an eye donation awareness campaign featured on South Florida’s local CBS station. He says he will continue to assist eye banks across the country to raise awareness for eye donation. He will also be helping with Eye Donation Month in November 2020, a national awareness campaign coordinated by the Eye Bank Association of America. Nolan stated, “I am grateful to my donor, Florida Lions Eye Bank, doctors, researchers, and hospital staff at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute involved in the amazing restoration of my vision.”

Krissy and Nolan regained their sight through the selfless gift of eye donation. Are you registered as an organ, eye, and tissue donor on your driver’s license? If you’d like to be, skip the line at the DMV and go to [donatelifeflorida.org](https://donatelifeflorida.org), where you can register as a donor online. Pledge to restore the beauty of sight to someone in need today.

*Page 3, top: Krissy, left, and Nolan by Florida Lions Eye Bank’s plaque. Bottom: Nolan, left, and Krissy, in the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute Lobby. This page: Krissy, left, Nolan, right, commemorate Eye Donation Month 2019 with Florida Lions Eye Bank’s Director of Public Relations, center.*