

# Eye Level

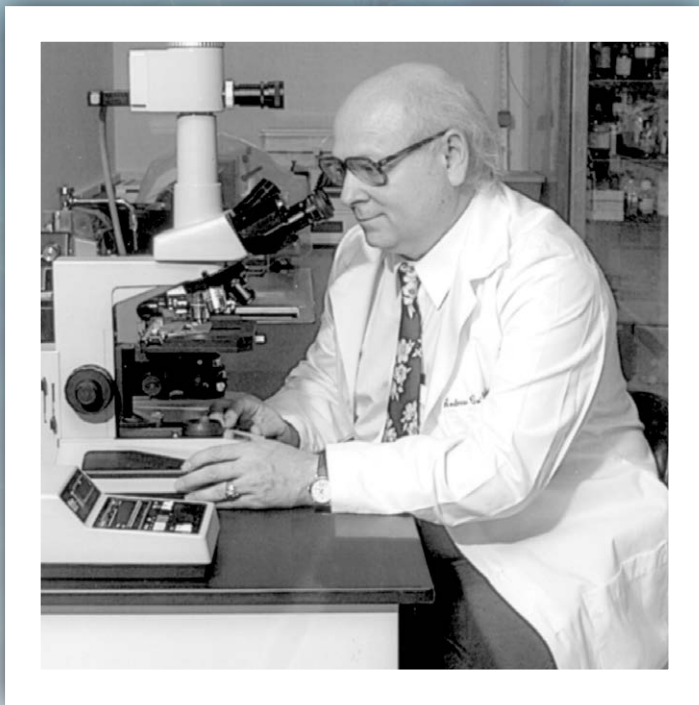
SPRING 2023

News & Views From Wills Eye Hospital

## A Tribute to a Beloved Friend and Colleague:

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# From Our Leaders



**JULIA A. HALLER, MD**

*Ophthalmologist-in-Chief*

**JOSEPH P. BILSON**

*Chief Executive Officer*

Welcome to the Spring 2023 issue of *Eye Level*. As seeds are sprouting and flowers are blooming, we reflect on our hospital's remarkable growth from its origins nearly two centuries ago. We are so proud of how far Wills has come on this health care journey of leadership in the pursuit of preserving and restoring vision.

On March 3, 1834, distinguished Philadelphian Joseph R. Ingersoll, Esq., delivered a speech at the opening of our first edifice—the original Wills Eye Hospital. He emphasized the vital importance of philanthropy for the institution to thrive and meet the growing needs throughout the community.

James Wills had bequeathed a generous sum of \$108,395.35 to the City of Philadelphia for the purchase of a lot and construction of the facility. Yet, Mr. Ingersoll's message was that this admirable act of charity would simply not be enough to provide care for all those in need. He underscored that private, voluntary donations would be necessary to augment the gift. This was profoundly true in 1834 and continues to be so today. The generosity of a multitude of donors throughout our history has enabled Wills Eye Hospital to be at the cutting edge of innovation, research, and novel treatments for patients in Philadelphia, across the country, and around the world.

Speaking of philanthropy, we are proud to announce the completion of renovations to our Glaucoma Service. This reconfigured state-of-the-art space, designed for more efficient patient care, would not have been possible if not for the generosity of private donors.

Philanthropy also enables us to attract superstars, such as Joel S. Schuman, MD, FACS, who recently joined our ranks on the Glaucoma Service and in the Vickie and Jack Farber Vision Research Center. Dr. Schuman holds the Kenneth L. Roper Endowed Chair and serves as Vice Chair for Research Innovation as well as Co-Director of the Glaucoma Service. Among his many accomplishments over three decades, was the development—with a team of colleagues—of optical

coherence tomography (OCT) for ophthalmology, an essential tool used worldwide in the detection and treatment of diseases including glaucoma, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy.

This newsletter issue is chock full of examples of the transformative power of philanthropy. It also highlights the accomplishments of Wills Eye faculty, departments, and community programs.

Our cover story, on pages 2–5, pays tribute to our beloved colleague, Larry A. Donoso, MD, PhD, MBA, JD, who passed away in October 2022. Best known as LD, he was committed to preparing for future generations and was a pivotal force in creating an endowment gift, which has significantly advanced retina research.

On page 1, meet Christine A. Chung, MD, Director of the Emergency Department. Dr. Chung takes us behind-the-scenes of one of only a few ERs in the country dedicated solely to the eyes.

And on page 6, Sara Tite shares her harrowing journey that led her to Robert C. Sergott, MD, Chief of the Neuro-Ophthalmology Service. After struggling with double vision that severely impacted her quality of life, she was diagnosed and successfully treated for thyroid eye disease (TED). Sara's story is truly uplifting.

On page 7, you'll learn about the value and significance of our fellowships, made possible by the generosity of donors such as Ken Gray of the Gray Charitable Trust.

Another important milestone is graduation, coming up on June 30. We look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of our extraordinary residents and fellows. We wish them well and success as they forge ahead in an array of new endeavors. Yet, as that door closes, we open another. We are thrilled to welcome our new fellows and the Resident Class of 2026.

Here's to the enduring power of philanthropy and bright beginnings! 🍷

## Eye Level

NEWS & VIEWS FROM  
WILLS EYE HOSPITAL  
SPRING 2023  
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NEWSLETTER TEAM:  
Jan L. Apple, Editor-in-Chief/Writer  
Rebecca J. Elias, Assistant Editor  
Christine J. Scully, Writer  
Karen White, KMHWhiteDesign.com

PHOTOGRAPHY:  
Roger Barone  
Larry A. Donoso  
Bill Romano  
Jack Scully

To contact *Eye Level*,  
email Jan L. Apple at  
japple@willseye.org

**On the Cover:** Larry A. Donoso (during the 1990s) in the Henry and Corrine Bower Memorial Laboratory. Right: A sampling from among his many original photographs, a hobby that he passionately pursued for more than two decades.



# A SIT-DOWN WITH CHRISTINE A. CHUNG, MD

## MEET THE DIRECTOR OF THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Since returning to the Wills Eye team in 2015, Dr. Chung has worn multiple professional hats, including attending physician in the Emergency Room – fondly called the WER.

### Q. What is unique about the Wills Eye Emergency Department?

A. The WER is one of three stand-alone emergency rooms in the country dedicated exclusively to eyes. We are open 24/7. It's actually a Jefferson facility but is staffed by ophthalmology residents and Wills Eye physicians: attendings during the weekdays, fellows in the evenings and on weekends, and Jefferson Emergency Medicine attendings overnight.

We draw from a large geographic area and receive calls and patient transfers from physicians' offices and hospitals in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

### Q. What type of cases do you see in the WER?

A. Anyone with an eye or vision problem will come to the WER. In 2022, we saw 18,000 patients. Because of the value people place on vision and eyes, patients often come to the WER with trauma, pain, or blurred vision – although the underlying condition causing the problem may have been present, ignored, and undiagnosed for weeks, months, even years.

We treat a lot of trauma cases and see patients with undiagnosed diabetes, vitreous hemorrhages, optic nerve swelling, double vision, headaches caused by vascular problems, tumors, inflammation, and infection.

We do imaging, such as MRIs and CT scans, and have access to the full suite of Wills Eye and Jefferson Hospital services for consultation and admission, if needed.

### Q. What does your job entail?

A. In collaboration with Bernadette Waskiewicz, Jefferson Nurse Manager of the WER, and Dr. Nadia Haqqie, Co-Director of the WER, I provide leadership to the Wills Eye physicians and residents. I oversee teaching, staffing, and coordination with Jefferson Hospital and

Wills Eye Hospital. I also serve as Director of the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Consult Service.

### Q. What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

A. I love working with the residents! It is gratifying to see them come in as first years and blossom into independent physicians by the end of their second year. I especially love hearing from residents who have graduated as they move into fellowships or practice. They talk about how valuable the WER was in their training. No matter how great the WER, we can always be better, and I am thrilled to be one of the voices moving us forward.

### Q. Do you have any goals for the WER?

A. The size of the WER has not changed since I was a resident. With Jefferson, we are exploring expansion in fiscal year 2024. I would like a dedicated fast lane, additional triage, and more examination rooms for greater efficiency in patient flow.

### Q. What did you do before ophthalmology and joining the Wills Eye faculty?

A. I graduated from Smith College with a degree in biochemistry, joined Merck, Sharp and Dohme in the Virology Department, and then moved on to medical affairs and clinical trials before attending Jefferson Medical College. I was fortunate to have matched at Lankenau Hospital for internship and Wills Eye for residency. Before returning to Wills, I practiced comprehensive ophthalmology with Ophthalmic Partners of Pennsylvania.

### Q. What makes Wills Eye so special?

A. It is the people! Everyone says it and it's true; we have an amazing group of colleagues! ■■■



## FAST FACTS

### CHRISTINE A. CHUNG, MD

**Spouse:** Arunan Sivalingam, MD, Co-Director, Retina Service and Director, Vitreoretinal Fellowship

**Children:** Seven total.

**Grandchildren:** Four boys, ages 3 ½ and under, with one more on the way.

**Hobbies:** I taught myself to knit during the pandemic. Babysitting and cooking, especially baking cookies.

**Favorite Ritual:** Monthly trips to Arizona to visit two grandsons.

**Favorite Pastime:** Travel – we recently visited the Vermeer Exhibit at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

**Career Highlight:** Coming back to Wills Eye.



**COVER STORY**

# A Tribute to a Beloved Friend and Colleague

## *Remembering Larry A. Donoso “LD”*

To describe the late Larry A. Donoso, MD, PhD, MBA, JD, as an extraordinary, forward-thinking, caring human being would only begin to scratch the surface of all that the man was and the far-reaching impact he had on Wills Eye Hospital and the field of ophthalmology.

Lawrence Albert Donoso, best known as LD, passed away on October 9, 2022, at age 79. Friends and colleagues who were closest to him say his life—well lived—was extraordinary indeed, resulting in an indelible legacy locally and around the globe.

Born on January 11, 1943, to Cuban immigrant parents—his father was an electrical engineer, his mother

a nurse—he spent his early childhood in El Paso, Texas. He earned a degree in medicine and a PhD from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Throughout his life, he pursued various educational endeavors—obtaining multiple academic degrees and credentials, not to mention a plethora of awards and honors.

Dr. Donoso joined the Wills Eye Hospital faculty in 1978. In 1980, he was named the Thomas Duane Professor and Director of Research. In 1986, the Philadelphia Retina Endowment Fund (PREF), administered through the Retina Service, was the beneficiary of a \$1,000,000 gift from the Bower Trust. The purpose was to establish an endowed lab investigating the retinal pigment epithelium.



**“Larry was an amazing human being who cared so much about people.”**

—Carol L. Shields, MD



▲ Carol L. Shields, MD, left, and Tamara Vrabcic, MD, were both close friends and longtime colleagues with Larry.

This became known as the Henry and Corrine Bower Memorial Laboratory. Additional funds were donated through the trust to create a research clinical fellowship. Dr. Donoso was the director of the lab and his passion for discovery a relentless pursuit.

Dr. Donoso worked with an array of fellows over the years, many from other countries. “Some of the world’s most influential ophthalmologists who worked with LD credit much of their success to him,” said Wills Eye photographer Roger Barone, who shared a decades-long friendship with the physician. One example, Barone explained, is Harminder Dua, MD, credited for discovering “Dua’s Layer” in the eye. Drs. Donoso and Dua established the Larry A. Donoso Eye Research Laboratory in the United Kingdom. Another fellow was Ming Wang, MD, PhD, Director of the Wang Vision Institute in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Wang is recognized worldwide for his groundbreaking work with laser vision surgery and cornea treatment. The physician’s autobiography “From Darkness to Sight” chronicles his life journey after escaping the Chinese Cultural Revolution and includes multiple accounts about his mentor, LD, and his time at Wills Eye. The book has been adapted into a film “Sight,” scheduled for release on Netflix later this year.

“Larry was an amazing human being who cared so much about people,” said Carol L. Shields, MD, Director of the Ocular Oncology Service, who first met Dr. Donoso in 1984. “He had this incredible zest for life and many, many interests. You name it and Larry was interested in it. Larry was brilliant, a dedicated researcher, and ahead of his time. He was sincere, kind-hearted, very simple—you’d rarely find him in a formal suit—and a powerhouse of information. He was also a wonderful photographer, and a dear friend and colleague.” Dr. Shields and her husband, Jerry Shields, MD, Director Emeritus of the Ocular Oncology Service, spent a lot of time with Dr. Donoso over the years—particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Dr. Shields explained that Larry never married nor had any children, so his research, friendships, and diverse pursuits took center stage.



Fellows

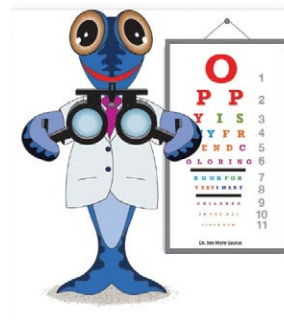
▲ Larry mentored an array of fellows, many from around the globe, for more than three decades.



▲ Larry A. Donoso

## SCIENTIFIC IMPACT

Dr. Donoso’s impact on the field of ophthalmology is nothing short of remarkable. “In the mid-1980s, Larry was working really hard to discover the retinoblastoma gene,” said Dr. Shields. “There were only three centers worldwide pursuing this: Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles, and Wills Eye.” Larry was so immersed in the task, Dr. Shields explained, he would often sleep in his lab. All three centers ultimately discovered the gene, but it was Mass Eye and Ear that first published the research. Although Dr. Donoso wasn’t first in that scientific feat, he pioneered others. In fact, throughout his career, he collaborated with scientists around the world and published over 200 scientific papers on vitreo-retinal disease.



▲ Oppy, a character named after a dinosaur, was created for a child-friendly eye chart.

Dr. Shields underscored that Larry also left his mark with in-depth research on the retinal S antigen—a gene that causes uveitis (inflammation of the eye). He also worked tirelessly, together with Roger Barone, on a multi-tiered project to make eye doctor visits more kid-friendly. The two created an eye chart and named its signature character Oppy, after the Ophthalmosaurus (a dinosaur that roamed the earth millions of years ago). “He cared deeply about children and wanted to make them more comfortable during eye exams,” said Dr. Shields.

Barone described Dr. Donoso as an amazing human being who was highly intelligent with a great sense of humor and an indefatigable work ethic. “He was extremely generous. Above all, he was fearless,” said Barone.



▲ Larry (right) with Jay Federman, MD, and Carol L. Shields, MD.

## PHILANTHROPY

Dr. Donoso’s generosity was evident on multiple levels, including an unwavering commitment to nurturing retina research at Wills Eye beyond his lifetime. He served as the Executive and Scientific Director of the PREF for more than three decades.

Jay Federman, MD, an internationally recognized retina specialist and former Director of Retina Research as well as Co-Director of the Retina Service, was a close friend of Dr. Donoso and a longtime PREF board member. He became Co-Director of the fund and worked with Dr. Donoso to create a research legacy that would thrive for future generations. The two also understood the importance of establishing a named chair at an academic institution.

“Larry was really passionate about securing major gifts from donors for retina research,” recalled Dr. Federman, who retired in 2018 following a 50-year career at Wills Eye. “He was tireless in his fundraising efforts and really good at it.”

In 2017, the physicians formally transferred the PREF to Wills Eye Hospital with specific directives. The endowment gift was close to \$4 million, and funds would be earmarked to conduct basic, translational, and clinical research related to retinal diseases. All research would be conducted within the Henry and Corrine Bower Memorial Laboratory. The lab director would be named the Larry A. Donoso Endowed Chair. “The goal of the chair was to attract innovative ideas and creative, brilliant minds,” said Dr. Federman. The world-renowned clinician-scientist Jose S. Pulido, MD, MS, MPH, MBA, has occupied this prestigious chair since 2021.

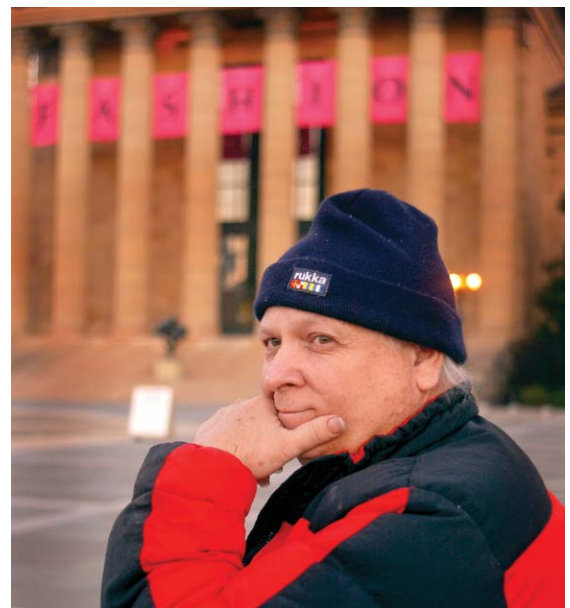
“Dr. Pulido truly embodies all that Larry envisioned,” said Julia A. Haller, MD, Ophthalmologist-in-Chief. “He’s a brilliant surgeon-scientist and a one-of-a-kind visionary. His unique and forward-thinking research aspires to bring hope to patients with blinding eye diseases through new diagnostics and groundbreaking treatments. We are so fortunate that he has chosen Wills Eye Hospital.”

**“Because of his commitment to philanthropy, we continue to attract the very best and brightest to our retina fellowship and retina research fellowship programs—generating ambassadors of his legacy around the world.”**

—Allen C. Ho, MD

**“Larry was really passionate about securing major gifts from donors for retina research. He was tireless in his fundraising efforts and really good at it.”**

—Jay Federman, MD



## RETINA RESEARCH & FELLOWSHIP

According to Allen C. Ho, MD, Director of Retina Research and Co-Director of the Retina Service: “Dr. Donoso’s scientific and personal interests are reflected in the treatment advancements for improving the lives of patients with retinal disease. Understanding the molecular and genetic basis of disease—as he explored with the retinal S antigen in uveitis—has propelled our field into the first in-human gene therapy in medicine. Our very own clinician-scientist, Dr. Haller, presented this groundbreaking therapy to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.”

Dr. Donoso lived to witness this major scientific achievement. “He was also aware of the international clinical trials that address more common retinal afflictions such as advanced age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy,” continued Dr. Ho. “We at Wills Eye are leading an investigation of new treatments for these global diseases, made possible because of the work of researchers like Larry Donoso. And because of his commitment to philanthropy, we continue to attract the very best and brightest to our retina fellowship and retina research fellowship programs—generating ambassadors of his legacy around the world.”





## PHOTOGRAPHY

It was Barone who introduced LD to the field of photojournalism, unaware of what would unfold. “After reviewing basic camera techniques and studying the use of photographs in magazines, he purchased a Nikon and several lenses,” remembered Barone. “A new phase of his life began.”

Dr. Donoso moved full steam ahead with this newly found passion. Soon after, he and Barone created a media company comprised of their images. Dr. Donoso also obtained press credentials from the City of Philadelphia.

His fervor for the art took him around the country and the world. Barone accompanied him on a number of adventures—some spur of the moment—to Utah, Alaska, California’s Death Valley, and the Barker Ranch in the canyons of the Panamint Mountains, to name a few. “Larry photographed politicians, parades, the Iditarod (dog sled races) in Alaska, and President Obama honoring Villanova’s NCAA championship team inside the White House,” said Barone. “Within a couple of years, his photos on Flickr surpassed more than 1.5 million views.”

Dr. Donoso’s treasure trove of images spans a broad gamut, encompassing NASA and spacecrafts, American flags, dinosaur fossils, geese, animals, national parks, bridges, sunsets, the Delaware River, and his adopted City of Philadelphia. “His favorite images to shoot, without question, were herons,” said Barone.

## LAST MOMENTS

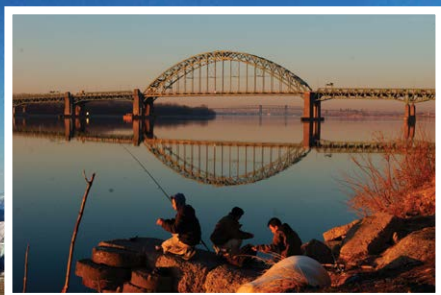
Dr. Shields recalled the final moments of her dear friend’s life: “On that Sunday, I got word that Larry wasn’t doing very well. So, I got in my car and drove to St. Joseph Manor at Holy Redeemer Hospital in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania.” Tamara R. Vrabec, MD, a vitreoretinal surgeon and former Wills Eye faculty member who now works at Geisinger Medical Center, was also at her friend’s side. She traveled several hours from central Pennsylvania to be there. Dr. Vrabec’s longtime association with Dr. Donoso actually dates back to 1989 when she was a Bower Lab fellow.

“We were his two favorite gals,” said Dr. Shields. “Although he was unresponsive, we knew he could hear us. I took a piece of paper from the nurse’s station and drew the shape of a heart. Inside it, I wrote ‘We love you today and always. Much love, Carol and Tammy.’ We taped the heart near his bed and left the hospital.” About an hour later, Dr. Shields received the news that Larry had passed away. “We felt like he was waiting for us,” she said. “I’m just so glad we were there with him. Larry was such a humble, special person; he touched so many lives.” ■■■

► *Larry A. Donoso during one of many photo shoots.*



Photos by Larry A. Donoso





# GRATEFUL TO RETURN TO HER GARDEN AND DAILY ACTIVITIES

One morning in July 2020, when Sara Tite woke up, she knew something was terribly wrong with her eyes. “I suddenly had double vision,” recalled the 55-year-old Lake Hauto, Pennsylvania resident. “I couldn’t walk properly; it was next to impossible to walk down steps, cook, read, look at a screen, or tend to my garden.” She explained that gardening has been a passion since early childhood when she had helped her mother and grandparents plant flowers, vegetables, and fruit.

Sara’s unexpected vision issues caused intense frustration, anxiety, and confusion. She struggled to work in her garden and the little greenhouse she had built on her property. “I was dizzy and disoriented,” she said.

Sara went to her local eye doctor, who suggested she patch one of her eyes. Although there was some improvement, working with only one eye severely impacted her depth perception, an essential visual function for gardening. Daily tasks were nearly impossible. “I couldn’t even wear high heels,” she said.

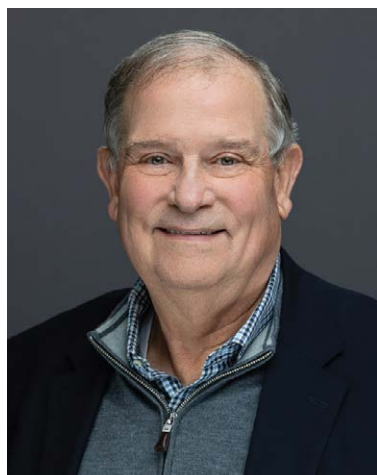
Sara, who retired in June 2022, after a 32-year career as a high school math and computer teacher in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, was still working at the time. She was grateful that she knew her subject matter so well, as she couldn’t focus on a computer screen. Her students, she said, were incredibly supportive.

In the summer of 2021, Sara’s double vision started getting worse. In addition, her left eye had become misaligned. “I didn’t know what to think,” she said. “I was very nervous as my eyeball had shifted.” Sara visited her neurologist, John Chawluk, MD, who referred her to a specialist at Wills Eye Hospital.

In November 2021, she traveled the two hours to Philadelphia for her first appointment with Robert C. Sergott, MD, Director of Neuro-Ophthalmology. “From the moment I walked in the front door, everyone was so nice to me,” said Sara.

Within two hours, after a series of extensive tests, Sara was relieved to finally have a definitive diagnosis and an explanation for her double vision. Sara was diagnosed with thyroid eye disease (TED), an autoimmune disorder that can cause inflammation (redness and swelling) and scar tissue behind the eyes. Side effects can include eye bulging, misalignment, and double vision.

“Dr. Sergott sat with me and explained everything,” recalled Sara. “He was so knowledgeable, warm, and friendly.” The experience gave her hope and an optimistic outlook.



▲ Robert C. Sergott, MD



▲ Sara Tite in her greenhouse.

**“It had been difficult to function and really tough to communicate with people. Now, I’m able to walk my dog and return to the activities that I did before.”**

—Sara Tite

“Sara had been treated in the past for a thyroid disorder and later developed TED,” explained Dr. Sergott, who recommended that she undergo a series of eight IV infusions over six months of a precisely designed FDA-approved monoclonal antibody. “The current data indicates that as many as 90 percent of patients treated for TED with these infusions may have a sustained benefit lasting for years.”

Sara couldn’t be happier with the results, which have proven life-changing. “A couple of months after I started the infusions, I started to notice a difference,” she said. “My vision just kept improving and I was happier. It had been difficult to function and really tough to communicate with people. Now, I’m able to walk my dog and return to the activities that I did before. My vision isn’t perfect, but I can do just about everything I want to do. I joined a professional women’s group and started doing more.”

Sara is grateful for the care she received from Dr. Sergott and his team, especially Reginald Edwards, Clinical Practice Coordinator, who worked tirelessly to ensure that her treatments would be covered by her health insurance. Sara has enthusiastically returned to her garden and greenhouse—which she had sorely missed. She even plans to take on new hobbies, such as golf.

Interestingly, Sara’s son, Andrew, 25, who recently became a father—making her a first-time grandmother—shares her passion and skill for gardening. The two plan to design a garden at Andrew’s and his partner, Meghan Moyer’s, new home.

“I’m feeling so much better,” said Sara, who is also looking ahead to tulip season. “They are my favorite flowers,” she said. “They are planted in the fall and bloom in the spring.” ■■■



# Philanthropy Enhances Patient Care and Education

## FELLOWSHIPS: PIVOTAL TO THE FUTURE

When Ariel Chen, MD, began her cornea fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital in July 2022, she was anticipating the challenge of diagnosing and treating an array of corneal infections and diseases. She also knew there would be patients requiring corneal transplants, as Wills Eye physicians perform hundreds every year. “The volume and diversity is so much more than what I expected,” said Dr. Chen. “It’s been an amazing experience and I’m shocked by how much I learn every day—medically, as far as managing patients, and surgically—with the many different approaches by attendings.”



▲ Cornea Fellows Nick Hadjokas, MD, Ariel Chen, MD, Patrick Burbano, MD.

Dr. Chen’s sentiments are echoed by the two other Cornea Service Fellows: Nick Hadjokas, MD, and Patrick Burbano, MD. The fellowships are made possible because of the generosity of donors, such as Ken Gray, Executive Trustee of the Gray Charitable Trust. “I’m fortunate that we have been able to fund the fellowship,” said Ken, who runs the trust with his wife, Doreen, their daughters, Kimberley and Meridith, and a long-time family friend. “I think it’s very important to train physicians, expand research in the field, and continue the tradition of medical excellence.” The Laibson Corneal Fellowship and the Heersink Corneal Fellowship are also donor-funded.

The Gray Charitable Trust has funded multiple projects at Wills Eye for nearly two decades. Besides the Gray Corneal Fellowship, established in 2010, funds have supported corneal research, a gene and treatment discovery program, and the purchase of state-of-the-art femtosecond lasers for refractive and cataract surgeries.

**“I think it’s very important to train physicians, expand research in the field, and continue the tradition of medical excellence.”**

—Ken Gray, Gray Charitable Trust

work closely with residents on a multitude of eye-related issues (not all cornea), including trauma. They are also involved in a significant amount of research, which is presented at the annual Wills Eye Conference every spring.”

According to Dr. Hadjokas, “It’s been a really well-rounded fellowship, equal parts academic and hands-on clinical.” The physician, thrilled to train at the “number one name in eye care,” chose the subspecialty because of the ability to impact a patient’s quality of life. “Corneal procedures can be visually restoring,” he said, adding that the field is continually evolving with a lot of new technology.

Dr. Burbano, who is employed by the United States Navy, is also grateful for the broad-based training. The military, he explained, has a long history of performing refractive surgeries, such as LASIK and PRK. “It’s also really important to have well-trained cornea specialists,” said Dr. Burbano, who finds it gratifying to be instrumental in positive outcomes.

The fellowships are a win-win for all. “We have the opportunity to mentor the fellows right before they go out into practice,” said Dr. Rapuano, “which is extremely rewarding. When we see them at meetings years later, they often tell us how much they learned at Wills and how much they appreciate it. Many establish their own fellowships. So, the tradition goes on, which is really wonderful.” ■■■



▲ Christopher J. Rapuano, MD, and Ken Gray

**Philanthropist Ken Gray Shares Experience as**

### RECIPIENT OF CORNEAL TRANSPLANTS

Over 15 years ago, Ken Gray noticed that his vision wasn’t quite right even after an adjustment to his eyeglass prescriptions. It was particularly apparent when driving, working, or trying to steer his sailboat. “I wasn’t focusing sharply,” remembered the 88-year-old Haverford, Pennsylvania resident. “I was referred to physicians at Wills Eye Hospital.” Although it was discovered that he had cataracts—commonplace for someone of his age—he was also diagnosed with Fuchs corneal dystrophy.

According to Christopher J. Rapuano, MD, Director of the Cornea Service: “Fuchs corneal dystrophy is an uncommon eye disorder that often runs in families. It causes the cornea to swell and lose its transparency, resulting in blurry or loss of vision. It often has a genetic component, but not always, and is one of the most common reasons for a corneal transplant in the United States and many countries around the world.”

Ken was a candidate for corneal transplants, but first underwent cataract surgery. Dr. Rapuano performed the DSEK procedure on the left eye in 2013 and the right eye in 2019. “DSEK is short for Descemet’s stripping endothelial keratoplasty,” explained Dr. Rapuano. “Only the back layers of a patient’s cornea are removed. A similar portion is then fashioned from a donor’s cornea and placed into the eye. It requires 0 to 3 sutures and vision recovers in a few weeks to months.”

“I am extremely pleased with the results,” said Ken, reflecting on the short recovery time and excellent care he received in both the Cataract and Primary Eye Care Service (CPEC) and the Cornea Service. ■■■

Donor support for the Wills Eye Fellowship Program in all subspecialties is vital to our educational mission. To learn how you can make an impact, contact Suzanne Beers, Chief Development Officer, [sbeers@willseye.org](mailto:sbeers@willseye.org) or 215-440-3154.

# 75TH ANNUAL WILLS EYE HOSPITAL CONFERENCE

Colleagues from across the country gathered at the Philadelphia Marriott Old City from March 9 through 11 for the 75th Annual Wills Eye Hospital Conference. The event, chaired by Sunir J. Garg, MD, FACS, included five named lectures and a free paper session.

The Irving H. Leopold, MD Lecture was given by Stephen D. McLeod, MD, Chief Executive Officer of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Dr. McLeod spoke on the topic of *Health Equity in Ophthalmology: Where Do We Go From Here?*

Awards were presented for the best scientific paper by a fellow and resident. The Silver Tray Award was presented to longtime faculty members Marlene Moster, MD, and Mark Moster, MD.

More than 200 people attended the Wills Eye Alumni Dinner Dance at the Ritz-Carlton Philadelphia, held for the first time since 2020. 🍷



▲ From left: Talia N. Shoshany, MD (Class of 2024), recipient, James S. Shipman Award, best scientific presentation by a resident; Conference Chair Sunir J. Garg, MD, FACS; Orlando G. González Martínez, MD, recipient, P. Robb McDonald Award, best scientific paper by a fellow.



▲ From left: Ravi D. Goel, MD, Christopher J. Rapuano, MD, Stephen D. McLeod, MD, Sunir Garg, MD, FACS, Julia A. Haller, MD.



▲ Silver Tray Award recipients Marlene Moster, MD, and Mark Moster, MD.

## WELCOME JOEL S. SCHUMAN, MD, FACS

The world-renowned, glaucoma visionary has joined the Vickie and Jack Farber Vision Research Center at Wills Eye. Dr. Schuman holds the Kenneth L. Roper Endowed Chair and serves as Vice Chair for Research Innovation as well as Co-Director of the Glaucoma Service.

Dr. Schuman is a pioneer in the field of ophthalmology. In 2001, he and his colleagues were the first to identify a molecular marker for human glaucoma. In 1991, he was part of the team that invented optical coherence tomography (OCT) technology, which provides quick, non-invasive, high resolution 3D mapping of the eye. It has become an essential tool for the detection and treatment of diseases including glaucoma, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy. Today more than 60,000 of these machines are used daily across the globe.



▲ Joel S. Schuman, MD, FACS

## CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST AWARD RECIPIENT

Congratulations to Natasha Nayak Kolomeyer, MD, recipient of the Amerem Glaucoma Society's 2023 Young Clinician Scientist Award. The award, presented to a clinician-scientist in the early years of their career, will support an ongoing project entitled Fighting for the second eye: understanding and preventing sequential blindness in patients with glaucoma.



▲ Natasha Nayak Kolomeyer, MD

## WILLS EYE PHYSICIANS TOP 2023 OPHTHALMOLOGY POWER LIST

Five Wills Eye Hospital physicians were recognized for their excellence and impact and named to the 2023 Power List by *The Ophthalmologist*. Carol L. Shields, MD, was ranked number one.

Physicians on the Power List include:

**Julia A. Haller, MD**  
Ophthalmologist-in-Chief

**Allen C. Ho, MD**  
Director, Retina Research and  
Co-Director, Retina Service

**Christopher J. Rapuano, MD**  
Chief, Cornea Service

**Carol L. Shields, MD**  
Chief, Ocular Oncology Service

**George L. Spaeth, MD**  
Director Emeritus, Glaucoma Service





## DOCTORS' DAY AT WILLS EYE

# A HEARTFELT THANK YOU!

Doctors' Day was celebrated at Wills Eye Hospital on March 30. This annual observance recognizes the contributions of doctors to our lives and communities.

A heartfelt thank you to all of our grateful patients and friends who demonstrated their appreciation for the compassionate and skilled care they have received at Wills Eye by making a donation to this annual campaign. This year, more than \$100,000 was raised from 534 gifts. There were 113 doctors who were honored by patients and friends, many of whom also shared personal notes of gratitude.

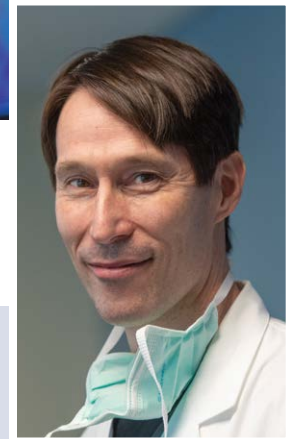
Gifts to the Doctors' Day campaign will support the *Fund for Vision*, which furthers our efforts to provide superior patient care, seed innovative medical research, expand our community and global health efforts, and educate future leaders in ophthalmology. ■■■



To Beeran Meghpara, MD –  
“Thank you for giving me back my eyesight after so many years of uncertainty.”



To Kammi Gunton, MD –  
“Thank you for always making me feel like you will never give up hope to help me regain my eyesight. You are an amazing doctor.”



To Jonathan Myers, MD –  
“I worry about losing my sight. This fear makes me appreciate even more the beauty in nature and people around me. I feel confident in your judgment and skills. You listen to my concerns and answer my questions. I feel so fortunate.”

## You Can Make a Difference!

# WAYS TO SUPPORT WILLS EYE

The Wills Eye Foundation, the charitable arm of Wills Eye Hospital, seeks your philanthropic support to achieve eye health breakthroughs here and across the globe. There is great urgency as a significant percentage of eye disease is either preventable or effectively addressed if detected in the early stages. With your help, we can transform the patient-family experience, forge new discoveries, bolster training and education programs, advocate for children and families in underserved communities, and quickly respond to new opportunities.

Your support of the Wills Eye Foundation will further our mission to preserve and restore vision for all!



SCAN HERE TO  
MAKE YOUR  
GIFT NOW

### Ways to Give

- ✉ **Mail:** Wills Eye Foundation  
840 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107
- 💻 **Online:** [www.willseye.org/giving](http://www.willseye.org/giving)
- ✉ **Email:** [giving@willseye.org](mailto:giving@willseye.org)
- 📞 **Phone:** 215-440-3154
- EIN 59-3794523**

### Types of Gifts

There are many ways to support the Wills Eye Foundation, including:

- Gifts of Cash
- Donor Advised Funds
- Gifts of Stock and Appreciated Securities
- IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution
- Charitable Gift Annuities and Trusts

### Estate Planning

Legacy giving is an impactful way to support our work beyond your lifetime. Contact us for more information about including Wills Eye as a bequest in your will or a beneficiary to your IRA or insurance policy. Donors who have included Wills Eye in their estate plan become members of our recognition club, the James Wills Society.

**Questions?** Contact Suzanne Beers, Chief Development Officer, [sbeers@willseye.org](mailto:sbeers@willseye.org) or **215-440-3154**.



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## EXPLORING OPHTHALMOLOGY: PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

On March 30, Wills Eye Hospital, in partnership with the KB Foundation, hosted 18 students—ages 13 to 17—for an evening of hands-on activities in ophthalmology.

The young men, from underserved areas of Philadelphia, listened to Walter P. Harris, MD, and resident Collin Richards, MD, who shared their personal journeys that led them to this field of expertise.

Donned in personalized scrubs, the participants then visited the William Maul Measey Ophthalmic Surgical Training (MOST) Lab where they performed suturing techniques on artificial skin, inserted artificial lenses in training eyes to simulate cataract surgery, and viewed pig's eyes under a microscope.



The students also spent time in the diagnostic lab where they operated testing equipment and learned about ocular photography.

Eleven of the students, who participated in a previous Planting Seeds event at the hospital, were given a special demonstration by ocular pathologist Ralph C. Eagle Jr., MD, which included specimen evaluation and microscopy.

Wills Eye plans to continue these community outreach initiatives with the goal of inspiring youth to explore career options in ophthalmology. 🏥

## SAVE the DATE 2023

**JUN 12** Wills Eye Golf Classic *Whitemarsh Valley Country Club*

**OCT 21** Wills Eye Ball *The Bellevue Hotel*

For information, contact Linda Mancini at [lmancini@willseye.org](mailto:lmancini@willseye.org) or **215-440-3154**.