

# 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

A COMMUNITY  
OF COMPASSION



 EYE BANK  
ASSOCIATION  
OF AMERICA®



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# CHAIR'S ADDRESS

Noël Mick, The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration

2020-2022



The Eye Bank Association of America marked its 60th Anniversary in 2021. While much data and information documenting the year is provided elsewhere in this report, it is an opportunity to reflect on the significance of our shared history. The same year our association of eye banks was founded, astronaut Alan Shepard became the first American to travel in space; and as the EBAA turned 60, American CEO Jeff Bezos took his first crew into space aboard his reusable rocket ship called... The New Shepard. What a great timeline to share. Eye banking has 60 years of its own historic accomplishments which are highlighted on the EBAA website (<https://restoresight.org/ebaa-60th-anniversary/>).

Additional milestones for our association worth noting occurred in 2021, including the fact that it has been 40 years since the EBAA Accreditation Program was

established. This past year also marked 40 years since the first EBAA Certified Eye Bank Technician Exam was administered. Both these programs continue today and exemplify the strength of EBAA in establishing and maintaining the gold standard for eye banking through its medical standards, accreditation, and certification programs. In 2021, the EBAA accredited 24 eye banks and between the fall and spring classes 28 eye bankers earned their CEBT credentials.

In other ways, this past year might be categorized as a bumpy ride due to the mercurial nature of COVID-19 and its variants. Transmission rates continued to vary widely from region to region with safety guidelines changing as well. As a result, the EBAA held its Annual June meeting virtually again, and the Board of Directors conducted the subsequent annual Board Orientation and strategic planning sessions in virtual formats during the 3rd quarter.

As what has now become the customary EBAA response to COVID-19, our work on behalf of the profession and our members continued despite those challenges. The Board's strategic planning session laid out goals for facilitating eye bank improvements like an increased emphasis on Quality Assurance education and training, including increased certification opportunities; expanding physician engagement through Paton Society Membership and forums to share medical director case studies; and establishing and implementing a plan ensuring that the EBAA incorporates diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across all aspects of membership.

By the fourth quarter of 2021, COVID-19 vaccination rates increased, and safety guidelines for gathering were relaxed, enabling the EBAA's Fall Meeting and Cornea & Eye Banking Forum in New Orleans in November to be conducted as the first in-person meeting in almost two years. The EBAA's Accreditation Board, Medical Advisory Board, and the Board of Directors convened and the Cornea and Eye Banking Forum held the following day included 338 physicians and eye bankers.

But, the bumpy ride continued, with more spikes of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, and while 2021 ended with hopes of more in-person meetings, that plan was curtailed and it was determined that the EBAA Leadership meeting and the Physician Leadership Program scheduled to take place in February, 2022 would be postponed to 2023.

Looking back on the 60th Anniversary of the EBAA, 2021 did not lend itself to the well-deserved fanfare we would have wanted to bestow. Yet, in many ways, it was quintessential eye banking. Advances were made strengthening the importance of non-profit eye banking in the form of successful state legislation; promotional

campaigns to inform our physician partners; and newly-designed resources to educate the public. The EBAA awarded high-impact research grants to foster innovation; implemented a new member service management system; and utilized multiple platforms for member engagement and communication.

Most importantly, the EBAA's core mission of providing safe, quality donor tissue was evident in the 83,501 sight-saving transplants performed in 2021 with tissue provided by EBAA-member eye banks. That is the best kind of fanfare.

Thank you to all our generous eye donors and their families for their selfless gifts; to our cornea surgeons for their surgical skill and patient care; and to our eye banking professionals for all the work you do to restore sight. Together, we create a **Community of ComPASSION!**

Chair

*“In 2021, the EBAA accredited 24 eye banks and between the fall and spring classes 28 eye bankers earned their CEBT credentials.”*

# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Kevin P. Corcoran, CAE

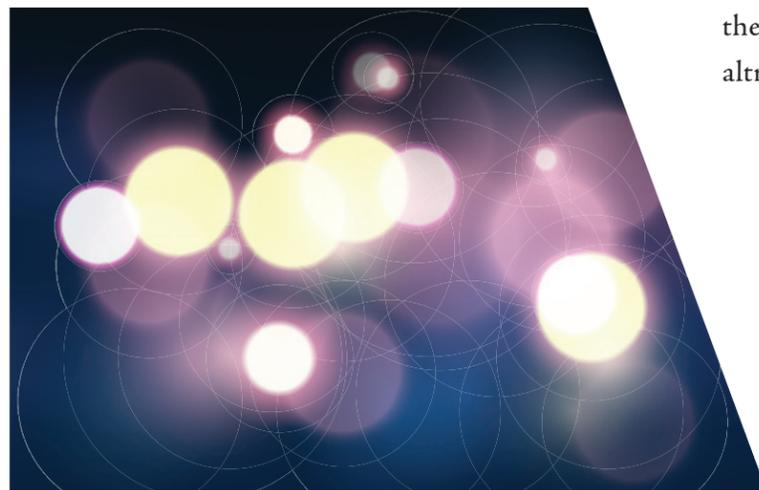
Well, that was different!

Our second year of the COVID-19 pandemic didn't feel much like the first. Instead of the shock and dislocation of the pandemic's early days, we wearily soldiered through the ongoing process of coping with our new reality. While there were flashes of hope as vaccines were introduced and case counts declined over the summer, these were often tempered by variants bearing Greek letters most of us had never heard of. Perhaps most significantly, this was a global pandemic that was experienced very differently based on where you live, where you work, and your political views.

Despite these distractions, or perhaps because of them, EBAA had a very full and productive year, serving our members and our profession through education, training, standard setting, and advocacy. We found new ways to bring members together without

leaving their homes, and celebrated milestones including the 60th anniversary of our establishment, and 40th anniversaries of our accreditation and CEBT certification programs. We introduced new services to our members and found creative ways to deliver existing programs.

We even made history when the Kentucky Governor, Andy Beshear signed a law reaffirming the altruistic gift of sight from donor to recipient. By preventing for-profit companies from performing eye banking functions in Kentucky, lawmakers aligned their state with The Barcelona Principles, a bioethical framework for ocular tissue explicitly condemning the commoditization of donated corneas. The Barcelona Principles were drafted with input from 83 separate countries and were ratified by all six transnational eye banking associations. Similar legislative efforts are underway in Florida, South Carolina, Minnesota, and Oklahoma, with other states waiting in the wings to launch campaigns this fall. We remain hopeful that these initiatives will help preserve the sanctity of altruistic donation.



Information about all these programs and more are included in this edition of EBAA's Year in Review. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without our members' extraordinary contributions of time, effort, and expertise. Nearly 300 eye bankers and physicians serve on EBAA's Board, committees, taskforces, and ad hoc workgroups; they are the engine that keeps EBAA moving forward.

For all that changed in 2021, it's nice to know that our foundational principles are as solid as ever. As EBAA enters its 61st year in 2022, we feel a renewed sense of optimism, and passion, for our important work ahead.

I hope you enjoy this retrospective of the year that just passed; please contact me or any member of the EBAA Board or staff if you have any questions about EBAA's work.

President & CEO



*“As EBAA enters its 61st year in 2022, we feel a renewed sense of optimism, and passion, for our important work ahead.”*



# EBAA 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating 60 Years of Leadership and Innovation



## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION IN: Eye Banking Cornea Donation and Cornea Transplantation



During 2021 we celebrated 60 years of leadership and innovation from EBAA. Since being established in 1961 as the world's first transplant organization, EBAA has grown and evolved considerably. Known as the "[Diamond Anniversary](#)", EBAA's 60th anniversary paid tribute to the past – making note of significant milestones over the past six decades, including:

- Publishing our annual Statistical Report (1962)
- Creating EBAA's Medical Standards (1980)
- Establishing our Accreditation Program (1981)
- EBAA's Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) program (1981)
- Eye Donation Month (1983)
- Forming the R. Townley Paton Society (1985)
- Offering the Technician Education Seminar (TES) - 1991
- Launching the Online Adverse Reaction Reporting System (OARRS) website (2004)
- Introducing the Physician Leadership Program (2011)
- Pioneering the Ocular Network Exchange (ONE) online tissue distribution platform (2019)



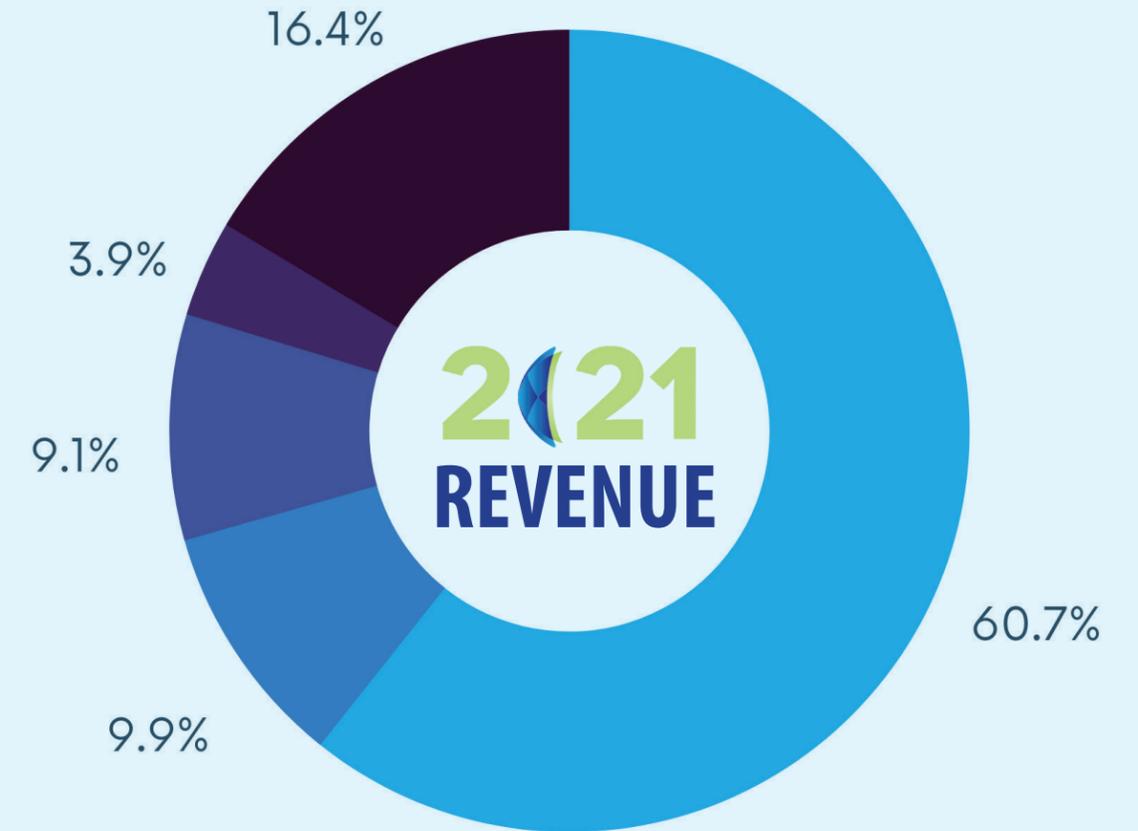
EBAA's [rich history](#) and traditions were marked all year long with entries in the monthly issues of *Insight* and shared widely on social media. Cheers to the next 60!

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Eye Bank Association of America  
Revenue and Expenses For Fiscal Year 2021

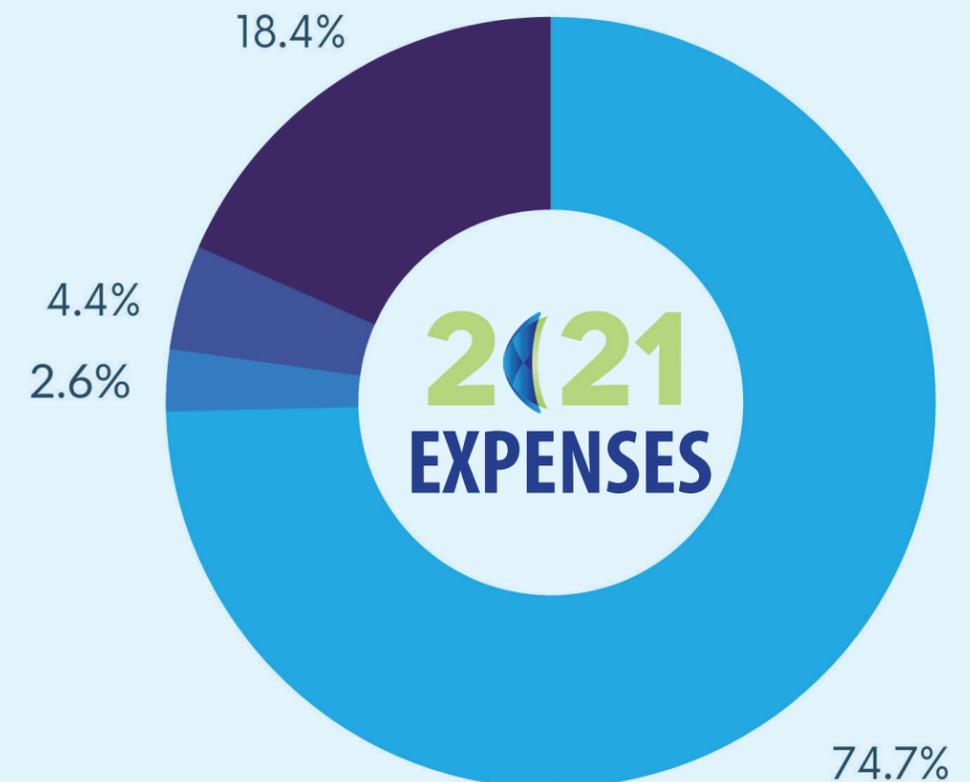
## REVENUE

Member Dues	\$1,447,337
Meeting & Events	\$236,473
Accreditation	\$216,418
Technician Certification	\$93,775
Other	\$389,944
includes \$166,048 in PPP Loan Forgiveness	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,383,947</b>



## EXPENSES

Member Services	\$1,575,224
Accreditation	\$54,832
Meeting & Events	\$91,942
Administration	\$387,321
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,109,319</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$274,628</b>



# STATISTICAL REPORT

Eye Banks by the Numbers



Since 1961, member eye banks have provided tissue for over 2,196,866 sight-restoring transplants!

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced both donor recoveries and corneal transplants by 20% in 2020. Surgical activity returned to 96% of the usual business practice in the last 6 months of 2020. In 2021, total donors were up 14.5% and total corneas donated were up 16.8% compared to 2020, but neither were back to 2019 pre-COVID levels. Total corneal grafts were up 20.2% in 2021 but still 7.0% behind the 2019 total.



Domestic keratoplasty procedures increased from 43,873 in 2020 to 49,110 in 2021 (11.9%). Total international exports were up 42.2% in 2021 after a 43.2% downturn in 2020. Neither domestic nor international transplants returned to 2019 numbers in 2021. Corneas distributed in long term preservation medium increased 38.9% in 2021 compared with 2020. U.S. eye banks also provided 21,647 ocular tissues for research and training in 2021.

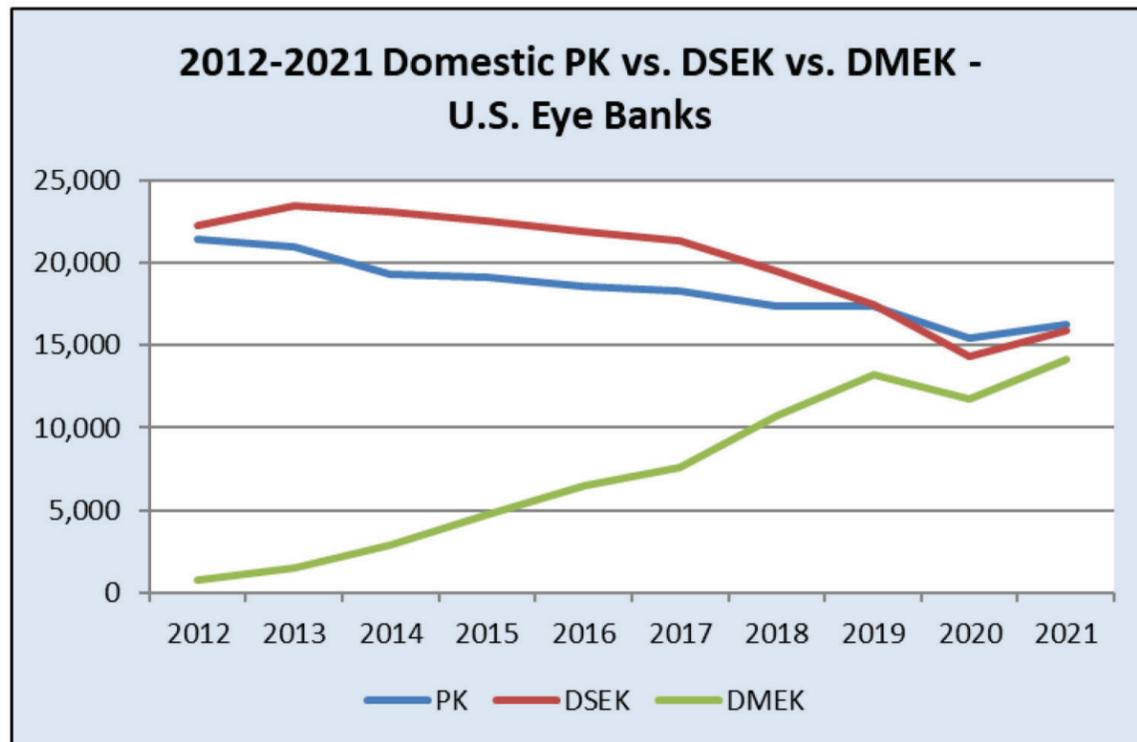
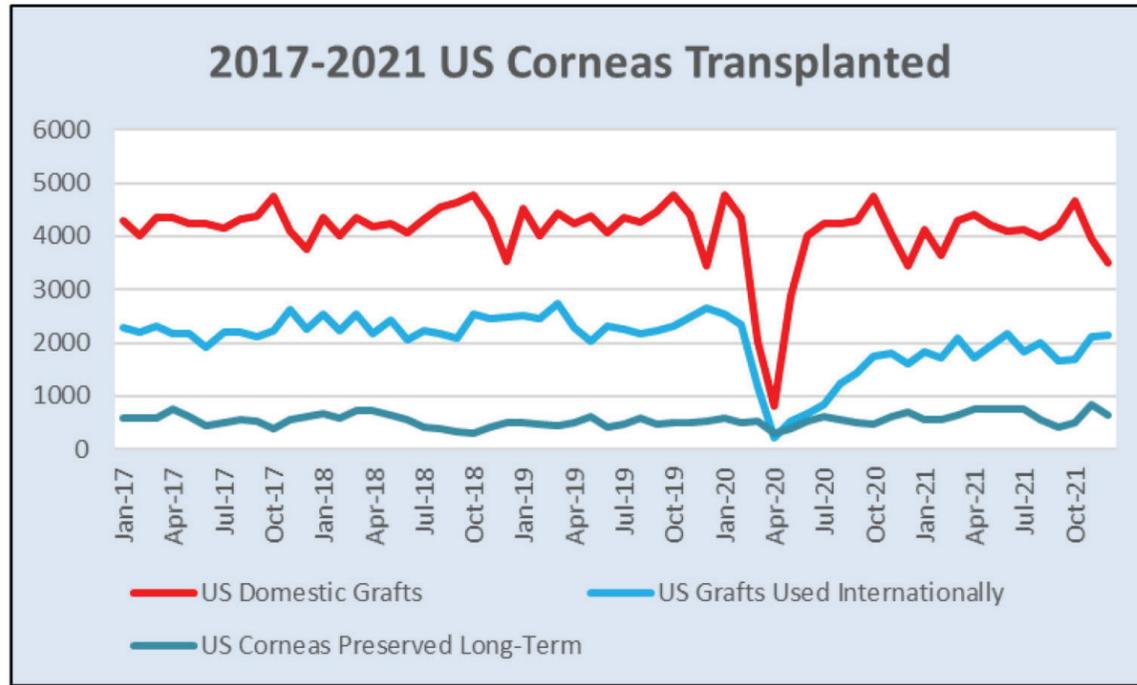
*“U.S. eye banks reported 126,623 total tissue recoveries from 64,048 donors in 2021.”*

## TOTAL DONATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION BY EYE BANKS IN 2021

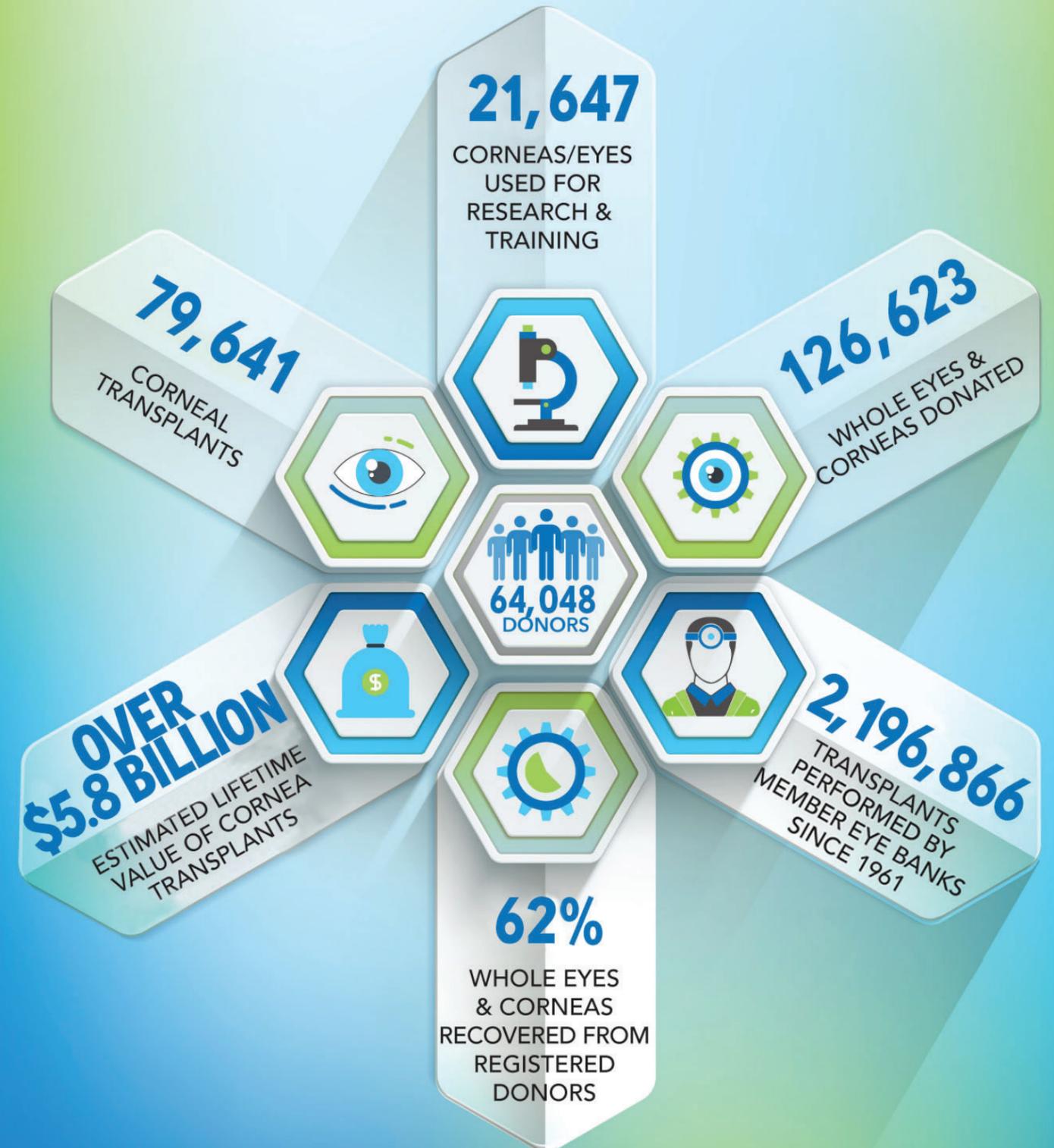
DONORS:	US EYE BANKS	INTERNATIONAL EYE BANKS	COMBINED
Total Number of Donors	64,048	3,218	67,266
Whole Eyes and Corneas Donated	126,623	6,416	133,039
Whole Eyes/Corneas Recovered from Registered Donors	62%	36%	
Corneal Transplants	79,641	3,860	83,501
Corneas & Eyes Used for Research & Training	21,647	1,438	23,085
Transplants Performed by Member Eye Banks Since 1961:			2,196,866
Total Value of US Transplants in 2021	over \$5.8 Billion		

# STATISTICAL REPORT

Eye Banks by the Numbers



# 2021 EYE BANKING BY THE NUMBERS



# MAIN ARTICLE

2021: Community of ComPASSION



## 2021: Community of ComPASSION

For Eye Donation Month 2021, we extended the use of the theme: “Community of Compassion.” This year we put the focus on the *PASSION* element of “compassion,” and it also seems like an appropriate focus for 2021’s Year in Review.

One can’t reflect on the events of 2021 without seeing it as a continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. However, what was “unprecedented” a year ago, is now an unfortunate daily norm. 2020 featured constant “pivots” – leaning into new and different ways to continue our mission to #RestoreSight worldwide. Whether it was moving events online and making them virtual, to having staff work from home, or splitting schedules so fewer employees were present in the office at a given time, necessary adjustments were made.

We did what we needed to do– but it’s impossible not to be frustrated and exhausted by it all.

## The PASSION Element of ComPASSION

Understandably weary entering the second year of a global pandemic, our *PASSION* really kicked in.

EBAA members are driven by the knowledge that there are 12 million individuals around the world who are suffering from corneal blindness whose sight could be restored with a transplant. Our eye bankers often describe their occupation as a “calling” rather than a “job,” and it is this spirit that kept us moving forward as an Association throughout a difficult and challenging year.

## Diamond Anniversary

2021 allowed us to reflect on EBAA’s many achievements and milestones as we celebrated six decades as an association. We created an “[EBAA 60th Anniversary](#)” page on our website to showcase 60 years of leadership and innovation in eye banking, cornea donation, and cornea transplantation.

Each month, *Insight* featured a different special milestone, which could also be found across EBAA social media platforms.

One such milestone was the 40th Anniversary of the Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) designation. This program continues to be the standard in eye bank technician certification and signifies a deep knowledge of eye banking practices, regulations, and standards. Two members of the inaugural class of CEBTs remain active in eye banking today; you can read profiles of their journeys in eye banking, and how EBAA has impacted their careers, throughout this Year in Review.

.....

*“This year we put the focus on the PASSION element of “compassion.” ....Our eye bankers often describe their occupation as a calling rather than a job.”*

## Legislative Efforts

Protecting the altruistic gift of donors is always foremost in our minds. In March, Kentucky Governor, Andy Beshear, signed into law [Senate Bill 12](#) to prevent for-profit entities from recovering, processing, or distributing corneal tissue within the Commonwealth.



The legislation was initiated by Kentucky Lions Eye Bank and supported by a coalition that included the Kentucky Medical Association (KMA), the Kentucky Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (KAEPS), Kentucky Donor Affiliates (KODA), the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, the Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation (KLEF), and Lions Clubs across the Commonwealth. It is the first law of its kind to ensure that altruistically donated ocular tissue is never treated as a commodity to be profited from. At this writing, similar legislation is being considered in four other states, and EBAA is providing logistical and informational support to these efforts.

In October, EBAA [submitted comments](#) to FDA, asking the agency to review its August 2007 Guidance for Industry entitled Eligibility Determination for Donors of Human Cells, Tissues, and Cellular and Tissue- Based Products. (HCT/Ps).

By aligning the HCT/P eligibility guidance with the August 2020 Blood eligibility guidance, the time-frame window for high-risk screening would be reduced from 5 years to 3 months. This would eliminate a policy that prevents certain individuals, primarily homosexual men, from donating vital tissues.

We also asked FDA to revise the travel exclusionary criteria to harmonize with their risk assessment and August 2020 guidance entitled *Recommendations to Reduce the Possible Risk of Transmission of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease by Blood and Blood Components*.

## Continuing Virtual Events / A Return to In-Person Gatherings

With the health and safety of our members always our priority, EBAA's central event of the year, our Annual Meeting, was once again held virtually. Having successfully conducted our 2020 meeting in an online environment, we were able to build upon successes and learn from the experience, making for a seamless and successful event in June.

By October, the COVID tide seemed to be turning in our favor, allowing us to host our Fall Leadership Conference and the Cornea and Eye Banking Forum, co-hosted by the Cornea Society, in person in New Orleans. The EBAA Board of Directors voted to enforce a proof of vaccine and mask requirement for attendance. A local vaccine requirement ordinance helped ease hesitations for concerned travelers, and the event was well attended. EBAA's members, leadership, and staff were all thrilled to gather together once again while conducting the association's business and sharing the latest research in eye banking and corneal transplantation.

## Physician Outreach

Eager to connect with corneal surgeons, especially those in the early-stages of their careers, EBAA launched our "Safety First. Innovation Always." outreach campaign. Public Relations firm Berlin Rosen was hired to advise, strategize, and execute these efforts.

EBAA contacted over 1,200 corneal physicians and researchers consistently throughout the year via email and social media ads. The efforts helped to build awareness and understanding of the EBAA Medical Standards and Accreditation program that ensure safe and effective ocular tissue for transplant and research while also educating about EBAA benefits, the innovations led by the association, and the value that non-profit eye banks bring to their communities and to the profession.

This campaign continues in 2022.

## Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

Always looking forward and striving for continual improvement, the EBAA Board of Directors placed a focus on the association's diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly in the composition of our Board and committee participation. In the wake of incidents in our broader society, which prompted a series of enlightening educational sessions during our Annual Meeting and other EBAA events, the Board felt strongly about ensuring that we're actively engaging all facets of our community. Realizing EBAA lacked the depth of knowledge and expertise to undertake this initiative on our own, we hired a consulting firm well-versed in guiding non-profit organizations through assessing and enhancing their DEI profile. These efforts were initiated in January 2022 and will continue throughout the year and into the future.

During periods of profound change such as these, it would be foolish not to ensure that all parts of our community are actively invited to share their perspectives and lend their talents to our efforts.

## The Beat Goes On...

Business may not be back to "as usual," but the EBAA has shown its resiliency, and also its perseverance; continuing to move forward, not only in the daily tasks of eye banking, but steadily closer to achieving our mission to #RestoreSight worldwide. We're able to do this in the face of a global pandemic, economic uncertainties, and operational disruptions, because of our collective **PASSION** for sight restoration. We're touched by the selflessness of donors and their families, moved by the stories of grateful recipients, and excited by the possibilities for the field in the future.

The EBAA community is one of **ComPASSION**; and we're eager to see where that takes us in the new year and beyond.



# EYE DONATION MONTH

A Community of ComPASSION



**MY NAME:** Patrice Morris Ball  
**MY HUSBAND'S NAME:** Byron Ball  
**MY PASSION:** Teaching Science

My husband, Byron, loved teaching and science - it wasn't just his occupation, it was his passion. He'd think it was so cool that someone was seeing the world through his eyes, thanks to the power of medicine and science.

*Patrice Morris Ball*

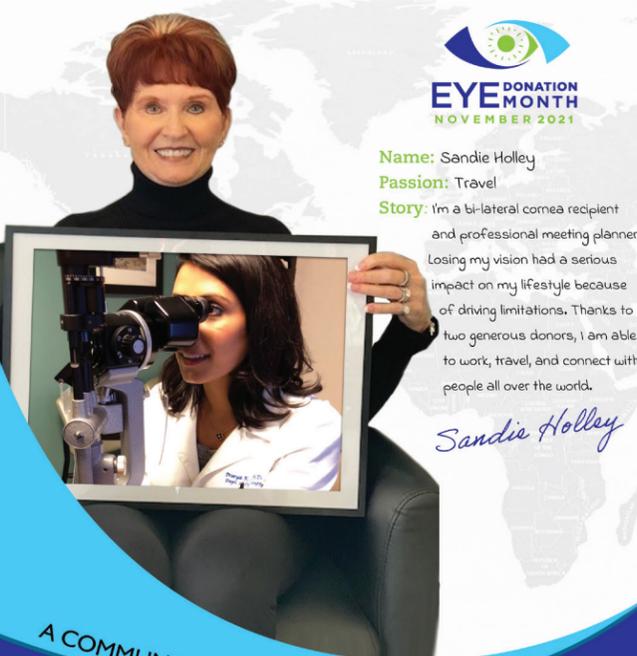
**A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION**  
Building Hope | Restoring Sight | Changing Lives

Join our community by registering as an eye, organ and tissue donor.

EyeDonationMonth.org

#EyeDonationMonth

SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT BYRON



**EYE DONATION MONTH**  
NOVEMBER 2021

**Name:** Sandie Holley  
**Passion:** Travel  
**Story:** I'm a bi-lateral cornea recipient and professional meeting planner. Losing my vision had a serious impact on my lifestyle because of driving limitations. Thanks to two generous donors, I am able to work, travel, and connect with people all over the world.

*Sandie Holley*

**A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION**  
Building Hope | Restoring Sight | Changing Lives

Join our community by registering as an eye, organ and tissue donor.

EyeDonationMonth.org

#EyeDonationMonth

SCAN TO READ SANDIE'S STORY



The overwhelming feeling of isolation brought on by COVID-19 in 2020 made us all appreciate the importance of connecting with others— this inspired the theme “A Community of Compassion” for our Eye Donation Month celebration.

In 2021 that same community feeling was still critical, but with eye banks moving forward and continuing their work to #RestoreSight despite the ongoing pandemic, we wanted to emphasize how much our members care about their work; this led to the PASSION element of ComPASSION. This renewed theme gave eye bankers and corneal surgeons the opportunity to answer the question, “I am passionate about eye donation because...” and to share their own personal story or connection to sight restoration.

This also allowed us to draw attention to donor families and other champions of eye donation and their attachment to our work, sharing their reasons with others, and encouraging donor registration. And cornea recipients explained the passions they can fully explore, thanks to the generosity of their donors and the gift of sight they received.

This year’s [Eye Donation Month website](#) was restructured to take advantage of SEO and online searches, offering more general information about cornea donation to educate the public. Materials for eye banks were neatly organized in a shared Dropbox file, eliminating clutter from the main page, and making the different types of tools easy to find.

## Theme Videos

Responding to feedback from last year, for the first time, EBAA produced more than one video to represent the theme. *Three* videos were created and available for sharing. They included:

- A “[follow-up](#)” with [Zoe](#), the adorable 4-year old “face” of Eye Donation Month 2020 – viewers were able to see how much she’s grown since last year, and the new passions she’s discovering while continuing to benefit from her transplant as an infant.
- [Byron’s Legacy](#) – the story of a passionate educator, scientist, artist, and cornea donor, as told by his wife. As an advocate for donor registration, she explains how “cool” Byron thought it was that someone would be able to see the nature he loved so much through his own eyes.
- [Sandie’s Story](#) – as a bilateral cornea recipient, Sandie is filled with gratitude for her donors and appreciative that she can continue to pursue her life’s passions, which include work, travel, and reading.

Each video was used as a social media post during different weeks of November, and were also converted to online ads encouraging donor registration. These ads were highly viewed (one video had direct views in the thousands and an unknowable number of shares), and resulted in more than 115 donor registrations.



**EYE DONATION MONTH**  
NOVEMBER 2021



## Social Media

Due to the ever-growing power of social media – and its necessity, given that COVID drove many in-person events online, EBAA added more social media tools to the online “toolkit” for members to use.

These included:

- I’m passionate about eye donation because...” graphic, with space for individual photos
- EBAA “Thank you for your service” Veteran graphic
- Three graphics representing each of the theme videos

We continued popular social media efforts from previous years, such as our “Eye Donation Month is Everywhere” campaign, where individuals took photos showcasing local landmarks or scenic spots using Eye Donation Month buttons. These were tagged online with #EyeDonationMonth, allowing people searching to see how expansive the presence of eye banking is.

Eye Donation Month social media posting and sharing was rampant throughout November. Dozens of posts were made from EBAA accounts, not including “shares” of member eye bank posts. Partner organizations were also supportive, with recognition from groups like: Donate Life America and state-level subsidiaries, AOPO, HRSA, NMAG, Cornea Society, AATB and more.

## Run For Vision

For the second year, the Run for Vision was a “virtual” event. More than 200 participants ran 5Ks at any point during the month of November and recorded their results. This socially-distant format allowed eye banks to use the event as a team-building experience, showing their passion for eye banking by dressing up in the Run for Vision t-shirt, running as a group, and sharing their experience over social media using #RunForVision.



## Next Year

EBAA looks forward to introducing an entirely new theme for 2022 and will once again produce multiple compelling videos for eye banks to use and share. We’re aiming to increase the number of social media graphics we have available and re-introduce some printed tools from past years as eye banks once again hold in-person events.

## Saluting EBAA Veterans

Because November is not just Eye Donation Month, but it also includes Veterans Day – EBAA spent the week of November 11th [honoring Veterans](#) within our association. Five Veterans from four different branches of service were interviewed, and their profiles were added to EBAA’s website and shared across social media throughout the week.



# MEETINGS, EVENTS, EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

Continuing Education with Eye Bank Association of America

Each year, EBAA hosts meetings, events, and webinars to provide education on important topics relevant to the eye bank community and convene members to discuss issues facing the profession.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, EBAA continued to be flexible with hosting meetings and offering educational opportunities. The bulk of content continued to be virtual, with some events like the Fall Meeting and Cornea and Eye Banking Forum held in person, due to lower COVID numbers at the time, and taking place before the Omicron variant hit.

The “Community Chats” initiated in 2020 proved to be helpful and popular, so they continued in 2021, with the topic areas drifting away from COVID-19 related discussion to other pertinent issues to the membership. eyeLEARN continued to be a hub for educational content, with additional free and on-demand resources being added to offer members more opportunities to explore different areas of learning.

The next few pages highlight events and educational offerings that EBAA hosted in 2021. Thank you to everyone who helped make these events and experiences successful. All these programs and sessions, whether in person or virtual, were only possible because of the hard work, flexibility, and support of volunteers, members, speakers, attendees, host eye banks, and sponsors. We hope to see you in-person in 2022!



## 2021 TECHNICIAN EDUCATION SEMINAR: A Successful and Thorough Learning Experience

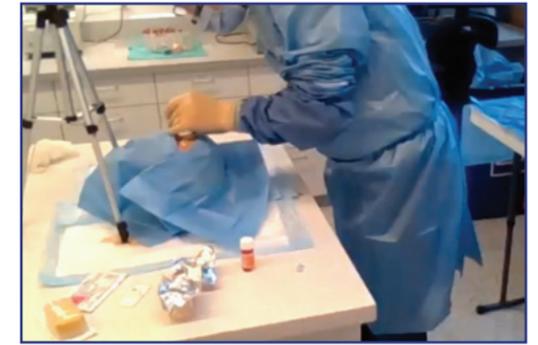
The Technician Education Seminar (TES) is one of EBAA’s flagship programs and an important step in an eye banker’s professional development and training. With the assistance of dedicated and passionate volunteers, we transitioned this beloved in-person event into a successful 6-week interactive virtual course. It featured 27 on-demand presentations and 5 live workshops delivered by 17 experienced faculty members. Taking place January 22 through March 5, the program welcomed 54 attendees and was streamed in the US, Canada, Germany, and Romania.

The live interactive workshops provided attendees the opportunity to ask questions, review on-demand content, watch demonstrations, participate in lively discussions, test their knowledge, interact with faculty, participate in activities, and much more.

### Highlights of the Live Sessions Included:

- Personal accounts of donation and sight restoration; how the gift of sight led to two individuals’ careers in eye banking
- Dynamic slit lamp microscopy evaluations and discussion
- Demonstrations of proper and improper aseptic technique
- A live cornea excision demonstration
- Games, activities, and more!

On-demand presentations allowed attendees to learn a variety of topics at their own pace and re-watch if they missed something the first time. In combination with the on-demand sessions, the live workshops and a special group on The Lens, participants received a well-rounded educational experience.



“The TES was incredibly thorough and brought me a better understanding of what I do and why I do it.”

### 2021 Faculty

Thank you to the faculty members who contributed to this year’s course, especially Troy Win’E and Ingrid Schunder for leading the seminar and for working diligently to plan a strong educational and meaningful experience for eye bank professionals. Also special thanks to Kristen McCoy for her impactful role in the live sessions.

“I enjoyed all the speakers! Everyone is so knowledgeable on their topics. The transitioning during the live sessions worked well and it was very engaging. It was a great experience! I learned a great deal!”

“I think the range of topics and the focus of each one was appropriate for all aspects of eye banking. Some were completely out of my comfort zone and I knew nothing about, and I liked that because I got to learn something new.”

“Overall I think this was a great virtual seminar! It all worked out really well; it was well organized and informative.”

## #EBAA2021: ANNUAL MEETING WRAP UP

EBAA held the [2021 Annual Meeting](#) on June 8-18. The themes of innovation, research, organizational culture, and the importance of cornea donation were all front and center through presentations, interactive sessions, panel discussions, research updates, roundtable discussions, award presentations, personal accounts and more. We may not have been together in person, but we sure did listen, learn, laugh, dance, and cry together during #EBAA2021.

The meeting featured governance meetings, educational sessions on a wide variety of topics, roundtable discussions, and networking events. The meeting kicked off with an Opening Session featuring personal accounts about the Gift of Sight, updates from other donation organizations, and the presentation of the Gift of Sight and the Crystal Cornea Awards. Tamika McClaine, a donor family member and new eye bank employee, and Carol Munchoff, an enthusiastic corneal recipient, shared their personal connections to the Gift of Sight and how their experiences have turned them into advocates of cornea donation. The Gift of Sight Award was presented to Jeffrey C. Holcomb, a New York State Licensed Funeral Director, the Founder of Continuing Vision LLC, and a father of a cornea transplant recipient. He received the award for the work he has done to promote cornea donation to others in the funeral profession. The Crystal Cornea Award was presented during an emotional presentation to the family of Makala Ashmar in recognition of Makala's tireless efforts to bring awareness to cornea donation.



Two keynote presentations highlighted innovation in different ways. The audience was treated to an interactive experience during Duncan Wardle's session, "Embedding a Culture of Innovation in Everyone's DNA". The former head of Innovation and Creativity at Disney facilitated a high energy session leaving everyone feeling ready to create and innovate. Later in the meeting, attendees heard from Steven Becker, PhD, the Associate Director of the National Eye Institute Office of Regenerative Medicine. Dr. Becker highlighted NIH-funded regenerative medicine programs and discussed the implications they may have for vision research and the development of future therapies.



Throughout the week, educational sessions focused on many aspects of eye banking. Highlights included:

- Research and Surgical Innovation: The Lasting Impact of Ocular Donation
- Engaging Residents and Fellows with Local Eye Banks
- Reignite Your Life: How to Manage Stress, Prevent Burnout and Perform at PEAK Levels
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The Lever to Competitive Advantage
- Metrics for Success: Strengthening Relationships with Donation Partners
- Establishing a High-Performance Culture
- Donor Tissue Evaluation: Current and New Technologies

The educational portion of the event concluded with the Scientific and Medical Director Symposia. The Scientific Symposium sessions featured rare videos of R. Townley Paton, an entertaining debate on the prevention of Fungal Infection after Keratoplasty and several scientific abstracts. The best paper of session



Duncan Wardle, Keynote Speaker

award, sponsored by the International Journal of Eye Banking, was presented to Sana Qureshi from the University of Michigan for her presentation, Safety of Eye Bank Prepared Pre-stripped, Pre-stained, Pre-loaded Descemet's Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty (p3DMEK) Tissue. The Medical Director Symposium kept people at their computers with informative sessions on the Determination of Graft Failure, Medical Director Dilemmas, and a mini-symposium on COVID-19.

Thank you to all of the speakers, attendees, sponsors, and planning committees for helping to make the EBAA 2021 Annual Meeting a success. We truly appreciate all of you.

### Annual Meeting Music Video

Meeting attendees joined performers from SongDivision for a fun [Rockstar Social Hour](#). This unique activity brought out the inner performer in us all! View the [music video and original song](#) that was created during the event!



Annual Meeting Music Video with The Song Division.

### Thank you to our Sponsors

Thank you to the companies who generously supported the 2021 Annual Meeting.

**Premier**  
Medline

**Silver**

Donate Life America  
Ocular Therapeutix  
Stephens Instruments  
Transplant Connect

**Bronze**

Airspace  
Eurofins/ VRL  
Innovia  
Triad Cornea Community



Annual Meeting: Drawing

“Excellent group of presentations/presenters this year. It was all very relevant and very HELPFUL content! Thank you for putting on another great annual meeting!”

“The Crystal Cornea presentation brought me to tears, and the donor and recipient stories are always my favorite part of the annual meeting. It's a wonderful reminder of why we do what we do!”

“It is always so meaningful to start out with the 'Why' of cornea donation. I appreciated the two awards and what they represented - strong advocacy for donation.”

## 2021 CORNEA AND EYE BANKING FORUM

New Orleans, LA | November 12, 2021

Vaccinated and masked, ophthalmologists and eye bankers convened in New Orleans for the [Cornea and Eye Banking Forum](#). Hosted by EBAA and Cornea Society, it was led and moderated by program chairs, Marjan Farid, MD, and Sophie Deng, MD, PhD. The [day-long program](#) featured the latest advancements in cornea and eye banking and included invited presentations on innovative research, award lectures, the presentation of scientific abstracts, discussion on timely topics, moderated discussions, and opportunities to meet and network in person.

Two invited panel discussions focused on the “*Future of the Treatment of Corneal Endothelial and Stromal Disease*” and the “*The Future of Artificial Cornea*.” Speakers discussed developments in novel therapies and approaches for the management and treatment of corneal endothelial and stromal disease along with the status and outlook of the artificial cornea.

The R. Townley Paton Award was presented to Jennifer Li, MD, in recognition of her many contributions to EBAA, eye banking, corneal transplantation and sight restoration. Dr. Li delivered the R. Townley Paton Lecture, “[Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History: The Advancement of Women in Ophthalmology.](#)”

The Richard Troutman Prize was presented to Maria A. Henriquez, MD, MSc, PhD, for her article, “[Accelerated Epi-On Versus Standard Epi-Off Corneal Collagen Cross-Linking for Progressive Keratoconus in Pediatric Patients: Five Years of Follow-Up.](#)” Dr. Henriquez delivered a lecture on the topic, discussing her research in detail.



Dr. Li and Past Paton Awardees

The Best Paper of Session was awarded to Adam Wylegala, MD, DMS, FEBO, from Bascom Palmer Eye Institute for his presentation, “*Topical 1% 5-fluorouracil as Primary Treatment for Ocular Surface Squamous Neoplasia: Long-Term Follow-up Study.*” This year, the Best Paper of Session was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Lions Gift of Sight and is awarded by the EBAA and Cornea Society for the best paper presented by a medical student, resident, or Cornea Fellow.

Thank you to Lions Gift of Sight, Wolters Kluwer, and Med-Logics for generously supporting the event through unrestricted educational grants. Thank you to Medline for providing hand sanitizers and wipes.

Thank you to the moderators, planning committee, speakers, supporters, and everyone who helped make the Cornea and Eye Banking Forum a safe and successful event, including the Southern Eye Bank staff for volunteering at the registration desk!

- *"Superior program. Topics relevant and impactful, novel approaches appreciated."*
- *"I liked that it covered both current and highlighted future technologies. Unique meeting with cornea and eye banking perspectives."*
- *"I thought Dr. Li's talk was fantastic. It's nice to see such passion in surgeons that are connected to EBAA."*
- *"The education objectives were met with flying colors. The meeting was a great success. This is always a good and informative meeting. Really like the free exchange of information at the physicians luncheon."*

### EBAA Fall Leadership Meeting: Celebrating 60 Years of Innovation, Leadership and Collaboration

The EBAA Membership gathered in New Orleans on November 11 for the 2021 Fall Leadership Meeting. The Accreditation Board, Medical Advisory Board and Board of Directors all met to discuss issues of importance to the EBAA membership. To commemorate EBAA's 60th Anniversary, the MAB Meeting was followed with a celebratory cake, and all who were in attendance were invited to join in.



### IN MEMORY OF George O.D. Rosenwasser, MD, CEBT

[George Rosenwasser](#) passed away in April 2021. Anyone associated with EBAA knew George; he was a fixture within the association, serving as lead faculty for the Technician Education Seminar (TES) for more than ten years, and as moderator of our Medical Directors' Dilemmas session in the Medical Directors Symposium for many years. He was the 2015 R. Townley Paton Award honoree, and one of just a few physicians to hold the Certified Eye Bank Technician designation, which he maintained for 30 years.

More significant than the list of George's roles and titles was his dedication to EBAA, the eye banking profession, and his patients. George was always generous with his time and expertise and was unwaveringly committed to improving eye banking practices and processes any way he could.

Many generations of eye bankers and physicians owe George Rosenwasser a debt of gratitude for the knowledge and wisdom, delivered with his distinct sense of humor, that he has shared with them. We are better for having known him.

## eyeLEARN: Learning Available On Demand

EBAA's online education portal, [eyeLEARN](#), continues to provide educational opportunities live and on demand. eyeLEARN offers [free sessions](#), [on-demand webinars](#), [live sessions](#), [virtual events](#), [event recordings](#), [resources](#), and much more.

This year, the Resources section was expanded to include customizable resources developed by the [Quality Assurance](#) and [Donor, Partner, and Community Relations](#) Committees for member eye banks. In the coming year, resources will continue to be added including videos and presentations to provide bite-sized learning to eye bankers and corneal surgeons.

Visit [eyeLEARN](#) to access on-demand sessions and more!



## Community Chats

EBAA continues to bring members of the association together for Community Chats. These virtual discussions provide members opportunities to meet individuals with similar roles or job functions to discuss timely topics and share insights, lessons learned, best practices and status updates regarding eye banking, donation or transplantation. The chats in 2021 focused on topics of interest to eye bank CEOs, technical staff, QA staff, donor development staff and communications professionals. We look forward to continuing to offer these chats and discussions in the future.



## 2021 EBAA Board of Directors

- Noël Mick, Chair  
*The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration*
- Jennifer Li, MD, Chair-Elect  
*Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank*
- Elizabeth Fout, Secretary/Treasurer  
*Florida Lions Eye Bank*
- Dean Vavra, MS, CEBT, Speaker of the House  
*Miracles in Sight*
- Woodford Van Meter, MD, Immediate Past Chair  
*Kentucky Lions Eye Bank*
- Winston Chamberlain, MD, MAB Chair  
*Lions Vision Gift*
- Chris Hanna, MBA, CEBT, *Utah Lions Eye Bank*
- Stephen Kaufman, MD, PhD, *Lions Gift of Sight*
- Eric Meinecke, CEBT, *Georgia Eye Bank*
- Shahzad Mian, MD, *Eversight*
- Brian Philippy, CEBT, BS, BCHE  
*Lions Medical Eye Bank & Research Center of Eastern Virginia*
- Megan Young, *San Diego Eye Bank*
- Kevin Corcoran, CAE, President & CEO  
*Eye Bank Association of America*

## EBAA Staff

- Kevin Corcoran, CAE  
*President & CEO*
- Bernie Dellario, CPA  
*Director of Finance (Retired)*
- Jennifer DeMatteo, MCM, CIC  
*Director of Regulations and Standards*
- Stacey Gardner, CAE  
*Director of Education*
- Colleen Bayus, MA  
*Communications Manager*
- Genevieve Magnuson, MS  
*Project Manager*
- Herocia Hawkins  
*Administrative Assistant*



Kevin Corcoran's appearance on PA Live (WBRE Wilkes-Barre)



## EBAA IS THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THE Newest Certified

# EYE BANK TECHNICIAN CEBT CLASSES OF 2021

### CERTIFICATION UPDATE

Since 1981, EBAA has administered an exam to enable individuals in the eye banking profession to become Certified Eye Bank Technicians (CEBT). The certification process is a long-standing, well-respected program ensuring that eye bank technicians are well-versed in the standards and regulations of eye banking. EBAA was proud to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the CEBT program during 2021. You can read profiles of two members of the inaugural CEBT class in this Year in Review.

EBAA held the Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) Exam in April and October, offering candidates the option to take the exam in person or at a location of their choice with a remote proctor. The Spring exam took place in April in the US, with 15 of the 22 individuals successfully passing the exam, for a passing rate of 68% for this cycle. A special congratulations to Jaelyn Jones from Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank for earning the highest score in the spring exam cycle.

The exam was offered again in October with 13 of the 15 individuals successfully passing the exam, for an 86% passing rate. A special congratulations to Marguerite Delvecchio from *Kentucky Lions Eye Bank* for earning the highest score during the fall exam cycle.

**Congratulations to everyone who passed the exam this year and are now Certified Eye Bank Technicians!**

### NEWEST CERTIFIED EYE BANK TECHNICIANS

#### Class of Spring 2021

- Lindy Brown, CEBT, *Lions Eye Bank of Delaware Valley*
- Jerry Burkey, CEBT, *San Diego Eye Bank*
- Andrea Carter, CEBT, *Old Dominion Eye Foundation*
- Daniel Gow, CEBT, *Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank*
- Claudia Hallagen, CEBT, *Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank*
- Bravin Herring, CEBT, *Lifeline of Ohio*
- Matthew Howe, CEBT, *Envision*
- Jaelyn Jones, CEBT, *Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank*
- Diana Mendez, CEBT, *Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research*
- Brent Mertz, CEBT, *Hawaii Lions Eye Bank & Makana Foundation*
- Mariana Montes, CEBT, *San Diego Eye Bank*
- Julie Morris, CEBT, *Lifeline of Ohio*
- Lisa Moul, CEBT, *Lions Eye Institute for Transplant & Research*
- Kendra Philipppy, CEBT, *Lions Medical Eye Bank & Research Center of Eastern Virginia*
- Mellissa Pottinger, CEBT, *Florida Lions Eye Bank*

#### Class of Fall 2020

- Natalie Buckman, CEBT, *Lions Gift of Sight*
- Stacey Bullock, CEBT, *Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin*
- Marguerite Delvecchio, CEBT, *Kentucky Lions Eye Bank*
- Natalie Lanum, CEBT, *Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank*
- Katrina Llanes, CEBT, *Florida Lions Eye Bank*
- Lauren Manguso, CEBT, *Donor Network of Arizona*
- Rose Manuel, CEBT, *Tissue Bank Manitoba Shared Health*
- Joe Monahan, CEBT, *New England Donor Services*
- Megan Moore, CEBT, *Utah Lions Eye Bank – John A. Moran Eye Center*
- Vlad Moraru, CEBT, *The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration*
- Randall Reed, CEBT, *Saving Sight*
- Sowmya Srinivasan, CEBT, *Kentucky Lions Eye Bank*
- Cassidy Townsend, CEBT, *New England Donor Services*

# AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Honoring People In Our Community

## JACHIN MISKO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR TECHNICAL ADVANCEMENT IN EYE BANKING

In 2021, the [Jachin Misko Memorial Scholarship for Technical Advancement in Eye Banking](#) was given to two individuals, since the 2021 Technician Education Seminar was a virtual course.

### Joseph Monahan, CEBT, CTBS

Tissue Recovery Specialist  
New England Donor Services

Joe Monahan's contributions to New England Donor Services include leading several improvement and structural initiatives. Joe is a self-starter and takes responsibility for his own development. Joe has been a leader in developing and delivering training content for new technicians, developed SOPs to adapt to changing requirements and is a go to person for solving problems in real time.

The New England Donor Services Goals were met this year because of the leadership that Joe and his counterparts demonstrated. His ability to adapt quickly to the changing conditions brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic and his commitment to the mission has made a real difference in the lives of others. He has been present for his team, removing barriers, filling knowledge gaps and weighing the impact of his decisions carefully. The Recovery department's Employee Engagement Scores increased from 79% in 2019 to 94% in 2020 with Joe receiving positive comments throughout the year from the front-line staff. Joe earned his Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) certification in Spring 2021.

As one of the recipients of the Jachin Misko Memorial Scholarship, Joe attended the virtual Technician Education Seminar (TES). Joe shares his personal account in this [video](#).



*“I'm amazed at the amount of important information I learned at the 2021 TES. It was eye opening to hear about what goes into processing and transplantation post recovery. I learned about the vast number of options for restoring sight and the incredible skill set needed by processing technicians to produce these grafts. I gained deeper knowledge about how different types of diseases affect sight and the advancement in technology and procedures for restoring sight. I learned a lot more about the evaluation that each cornea receives prior to transplant. It was extremely helpful to find out about different practices other eye banks use to maximize the gift of sight.”*

*I'm honored to have had the opportunity to participate, and I'm looking forward to sharing all that I've learned with my staff at New England Donor Services.”*

## JACHIN MISKO MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR TECHNICAL ADVANCEMENT IN EYE BANKING

### Kendra Phillipy, CEBT

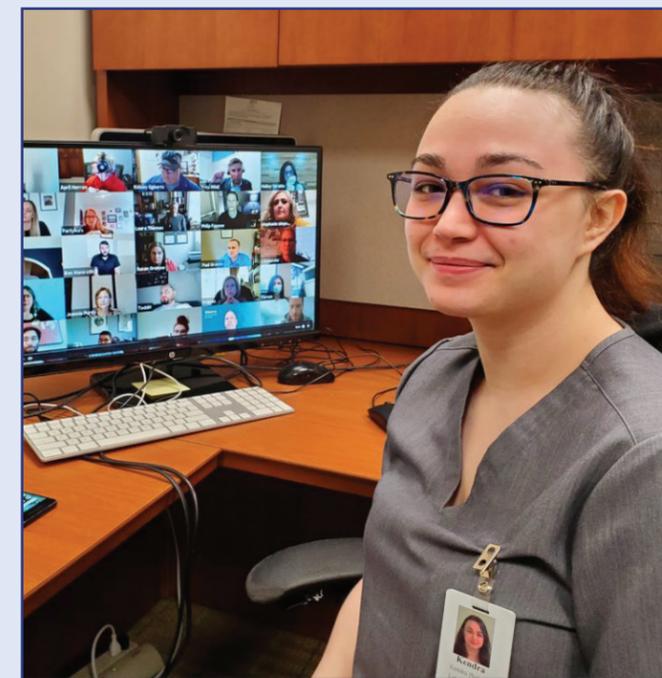
Donation Coordinator  
Lions Medical Eye Bank & Research Center of Eastern Virginia

Kendra Phillipy has helped drive innovation by being very familiar with the arena of donor coordination and applying her skills of that to the technical side of eye banking with a fresh pair of eyes and an open and willing to learn mind. Her enthusiasm, base knowledge, and eagerness to help others helps mold our current procedures and protocols into more efficient and foolproof systems.

Kendra has demonstrated leadership by constantly holding herself to a high standard of work ethic, no matter the situation. She rises up to show others that calm composition, critical thinking, compassion and empathy are appropriate in all situations, even if it means putting your own needs behind those of the greater cause. Kendra earned her Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) certification in Spring 2021.

As one of the recipients of the Jachin Misko Memorial Scholarship, Kendra attended the virtual Technician Education Seminar (TES). Kendra shares her personal account in this [video](#).

The Jachin Misko Memorial Scholarship for Technical Advancement in Eye Banking honors the memory of Jachin Misko, an eye bank technician who was dedicated to technical innovation in eye banking, and brings a highly motivated technician from an EBAA member eye bank to the Technician Education Seminar. Thank you to Saving Sight for sponsoring this scholarship.



*“The TES was just as informative and interesting as I had hoped it would be. I've been in eye banking for 6 years now, working mostly remotely as a donor coordinator until recently. My roles have been changing, requiring me to learn new steps in the donation process including tissue evaluation, tissue processing, and distribution.”*

*The modules and time spent on slit lamp usage was especially useful for me. I'm training to evaluate tissue currently, and some things, such as a Descemet's tear, I haven't experienced yet during training. So, seeing images of various slit lamp findings were very helpful.*

*All the staff involved did a wonderful job and provided great information. Despite the obvious issue of not being able to hold this seminar in person, I think the program was surprisingly interactive, entertaining, and enjoyable.”*

## R. TOWNLEY PATON AWARD

### Jennifer Li, MD

Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank/UC Davis

*Presented during the Cornea and Eye Banking Forum- access the [Paton Award Presentation and Lecture](#).*

Jennifer Li, MD, is a Professor of Ophthalmology and the Director of the Cornea and External Disease Service at the University of California, Davis, and the Medical Director for Sierra Donor Services Eye Bank. Dr. Li serves as the Chair-Elect of the Board of Directors of the Eye Bank Association of America and has volunteered much of her time and expertise over the past decade to the EBAA by serving on various committees including her most recent role as the Chair of the EBAA Medical Advisory Board. Dr. Li completed her medical degree and residency at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX, and subsequently, her cornea fellowship at UC Davis. Dr. Li's practice focuses on cornea, complex anterior segment, and refractive surgery. Her research interests include corneal transplantation techniques and eye banking.

Dr. Li is actively involved in resident and fellow education and received the UC Davis Ophthalmology Faculty Surgical Teaching Award presented by the residents in 2018. She is currently one of the Program Chairs for the Cornea Society Fellows Educational Summit, and was Program Director for the AAO Cornea Subspecialty Day from 2017-2019.

Dr. Li is considered an expert in the field of newer selective corneal transplantation techniques such as endothelial keratoplasty (DSAEK, DMEK, DSO) and deep anterior lamellar keratoplasty (DALK). Dr. Li is known as an educator and is actively involved in resident and fellow education both at a UC Davis and on a national level.



As an active member of the EBAA for many years, Dr. Li was nominated to participate in the first class of the EBAA Physician Leadership Program, is an active Paton Society Member, and has served on several EBAA committees, including the Board of Directors, the Medical Advisory Board, the Accreditation Board, the Scientific Programs Committee, the Career Development Committee and the Physician Leadership Program faculty.

The R. Townley Paton Award was presented to Dr. Li for her service, dedication and many contributions to the EBAA, eye banking, corneal transplantation and restoring sight worldwide.

*The R. Townley Paton Award is EBAA's highest honor for corneal surgeons presented annually to an ophthalmologist in recognition of his/her contributions to EBAA for exemplifying the precepts of modern eye banking, and the founder of the first eye bank established in the United States.*

*“For me, at the heart of it is my desire to improve my patients' vision and quality of life through corneal transplantation. The corollary of that of course is the understanding and appreciation for the role that eye banking and donors play in making it all possible. By helping to advance corneal transplantation and eye banking, I can be a small part of that ultimate vision: restoration of sight worldwide.”*

## LEONARD HEISE AWARD

### Brian Phillipy, BChE, BS, CEPT

Director of Transplant and Research

Lions Medical Eye Bank & Research Center of Eastern Virginia

*Due to the circumstances of 2021, Brian will be honored during the 2022 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland.*

Brian has been an eye banker since he was 18 years old, starting in Minneapolis in 1997 and transferring to Norfolk in 2005. During that time, Brian has served in every technical role (e.g. recovery, donor coordinator, donor eligibility, distribution, etc.) and as quality director. Brian has extensive consulting experience (more than 10 years) and has given his expertise to his peers through a tireless array of volunteer committee service.

Brian has served on many EBAA committees including the Accreditation Board, Medical Advisory Board, and Legislative and Regulatory committee. He is Chair of the Statistical Report committee and is a current member of the EBAA Board of Directors. Brian has maintained his status as a Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) since 2003 and contributed to the success of a number of EBAA programs and initiatives.

Brian Phillipy is an eye banker that raises eye bankers. His wife and daughter have caught the eye banking “bug” through his infectious passion for the profession and everything eye banking represents. When he's not processing data and doing his part to save sight, you'll find Brian and his wife, Wanda, fishing, camping, or leading and teaching Scouts.

The Leonard Heise Award is presented to Brian in recognition of his service, commitment and passion for eye banking, and the work he has done to restore sight worldwide.



*The Leonard Heise Award is presented to non-physician eye bankers in recognition of their outstanding devotion to EBAA's development and for exemplifying the precepts of Leonard Heise, a major contributor to the fight against blindness and one of EBAA's founders.*

## GIFT OF SIGHT AWARD

### Jeffrey C. Holcomb

New York State Licensed Funeral Director

Founder of Continuing Vision LLC

*Nominated by The Eye-Bank of Sight Restoration*

The Gift of Sight Award was presented to Jeffrey C. Holcomb during the 2021 Annual Meeting. Jeffrey, a Funeral Director and Founder of Continuing Vision LLC, has been affiliated with The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration's program for 26 years, since his son, Brian, received his first cornea transplant in 1996.

As a funeral director, Jeffrey has made significant contributions toward advancing the gift of sight through his partnership with The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration. Jeffrey's role in providing state accredited continuing education for funeral professionals through his company, Continuing Vision, has uniquely situated him to provide a forum to share information about how funeral directors can help give the gift of sight. He has invited Eye-Bank Hospital and Community Liaisons to present hour-long educational sessions in Continuing Vision seminars ten times since 2014, reaching more than 850 funeral professionals throughout the greater New York Metropolitan area.

As the father of two cornea transplant recipients, Jeffrey always introduces the topic of eye donation with a story about how eye donation has a deeply personal meaning for him because of how it has affected his family and enabled both of his children to see again. In the most recent seminar in October 2020, Jeffrey told the room full of funeral directors that the subject of eye donation was the most important thing they would learn about all day. Jeffrey's heartfelt and positive introductions always ensure attentive and engaged participation from seminar attendees, and constructive question and answer sessions.



Jeffrey is quoted in The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration's funeral director presentation and brochure, "I can personally attest to The Eye-Bank's dedicated and highly skilled team that makes the donation process one with the funeral arrangements and preparation." This assurance helps to assuage any doubts that his colleagues may have regarding timing and coordination of eye donation recovery and the funeral home's responsibilities. Jeffrey's extensive and tireless efforts have demonstrated his commitment and passion for the gift of sight.

*The Gift of Sight Award is presented annually to a professional(s) who works closely with the eye banking community and whose efforts have demonstrated significant support of eye banking and corneal donation.*

## CRYSTAL CORNEA AWARD

### Makala Ashmar

Donation Advocate

*Nominated by SightLife*

The Crystal Cornea was awarded posthumously to Makala Ashmar in honor of her dedication to the gift of sight. The award was presented to her family during the 2021 Annual Meeting.

Makala Ashmar's passionate, impactful advocacy for cornea donation began shortly after losing her father, Sam, who gave the selfless gift of sight in 2014. As a donor family member, she saw how partnering with SightLife through the donation process supported her own family's grief and healing process. The knowledge that their father's legacy would live on through the gift of sight, and that two people's lives would be transformed through the generous act of donation, brought Makala and her family great peace. Through this, it became clear to Makala that her personal story and advocacy skills could help uplift the cause of donation, ensuring more donor families and transplant recipients experienced the same benefits she had. And she did just that right up to her own untimely passing on September 5, 2020, after which she – like her father before her – gave the gift of sight to two people in need.

Makala's contributions are significant and wide-ranging. As part of her work with U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent, Makala arranged for him to visit the former Northeast Pennsylvania Lions Eye Bank (now SightLife), which created a cornea donation champion in Congress and raised awareness of the cause within the broader regional community. Another example of Makala's impact is her facilitation of an annual formal resolution honoring Donate Life Month by the Commissioners of Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. She also volunteered as a Lehigh



Valley Ambassador for Gift of Life Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness, and regularly co-hosted SightLife eye bank tours and visits with individuals ranging from elected political officials to local high school students.

In addition to her advocacy and awareness efforts, Makala was a regular at SightLife and other donation rallies and events, taking every opportunity to share her personal story. Makala wholeheartedly believed in donation and amplifying the profound impact of organ and tissue donors – so people understood why more are needed.

Makala's advocacy continued even when faced with a grim diagnosis in 2018. During her 2-year battle with a rare form of liver cancer, she provided updates to her friends at SightLife – often expressing her concerns that medical trials would make her ineligible for donation. Her dedication to the mission was the epitome of selflessness and honoring her wish to donate was SightLife's true privilege. A video honoring Makala can be viewed [here](#).

*The Crystal Cornea Award is presented to individuals or organizations whose work helps the eye bank community give the gift of sight.*

# CONGRATULATIONS TO EBAA'S 2021 PILOT RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

Each year, EBAA awards the EBAA Pilot Research Grant to fund proposals specifically concerned with issues directly related to eye banking and/or corneal transplantation. Preference is given to pilot projects, well-defined short-term protocols, and initial studies directed toward new research initiatives. This year, eight proposals received the Pilot Research Grant. Congratulations to this year's recipients!

## THE 2021 PILOT RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

### Anthony Aldave, MD

#### UCLA Stein Eye Institute

Does COVID-19 Vaccination Increase the Risk of Corneal Transplant Rejection?

### Alfonso L. Sabater, MD

#### Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

A Novel Dual-Chamber Vial for Corneal Preservation

### Onkar Sawant, PhD

#### Eversight

S-Nitrosylation (SNO) Therapy to Fortify Corneal Storage Media

### Bryce Shonka, BS

#### Iowa Lions Eye Bank

Preventing Preservation-Associated Oxidative Damage in Donor Corneal Endothelial Cells

### Shameema Sikder, MD

#### Johns Hopkins University,

#### Wilmer Eye Institute

DMEK Donor Graft Preparation Proficiency: Development and Evaluation of an Assessment Tool

### Divya Srikumaran, MD

#### Johns Hopkins University,

#### Wilmer Eye Institute

Patient- and Surgeon-Level Factors Associated with Early Re-Grafts after Endothelial Keratoplasty: Analysis of a National Medicare Claims Dataset

### Ching Yuan, PhD, CEBT

#### Lions Gift of Sight

Identification of SARS-CoV-2 Cell-Entry Inhibitors Using Corneal Cells

### Madeline Yung, MD

#### UC Davis Eye Center

Induction of Antimicrobial Peptide Expression by Andrographolide in Human Donor Corneas

## HIGH IMPACT RESEARCH GRANT

The High Impact Research Grant has been awarded to Eversight for their proposal, "Development of Eye Bank Prepared Allogenic Limbal Stem Cell-Enriched Grafts." Onkar Sawant, PhD, Shahzad Mian, MD, and Nambi Nallasamy, MD, received an award of \$50,000 to complete their research. The award was announced by Research Committee Chair, Bennie Jeng, MD, during the Cornea and Eye Banking Forum.

In 2022, EBAA will open a request for proposals on "Topical Therapies to Improve Corneal Transplant Outcomes" and one proposal will be selected for funding with the High Impact Research Grant up to \$50,000. The call for proposals is open.

# MAKING HISTORY DEFENDING THE ALTRUISTIC GIFT OF SIGHT

Eye bankers are committed to preserving the altruistic gift of sight from donor to recipient. Since before the founding of the first eye bank in 1946, eye banking has been performed as a charitable act. This expectation was enshrined in EBAA's founding documents in 1961 and to this day, our bylaws stipulate that member eye banks must be non-profit organizations.

So it was a shock in 2016 when the for-profit company now known as CorneaGen was established to process and distribute corneal tissue, with the stated intent to file an Initial Public Offering and become a publicly traded company. That shock, coupled with CorneaGen's aggressive fundraising from venture capital firms, and similarly aggressive competition for tissue recovery sites and distribution outlets, caused EBAA and its members to be slow in responding to the threat to eye banking's inherent altruism.

Showing our ongoing commitment to protecting the gift of sight, in 2018 EBAA was one of eleven signatories to The Barcelona Principles, the world's first bioethical framework for the use of donated ocular tissue. Drafted by the Global Alliance of Eye Bank Associations and endorsed by the World Health Organization, The Barcelona Principles' first two tenets are to respect the donor's autonomy and protect the integrity of the altruistic donation, demonstrating that the entire world is committed to nonprofit eye banking.



Within the United States, many eye banks undertook legislative initiatives to ensure that corporate entities could not recover or distribute ocular tissue within their states, with profits from their operations possibly flowing back to investors or shareholders. These initiatives ranged from Florida (2019 – 2022) and Minnesota (2019, 2022), to South Carolina (2021–2022) and Oklahoma (2022). These bills are working their way through the committees of their respective states as we go to press, and we remain hopeful for a successful outcome in one or more of these legislatures.

Hope is not necessary in Kentucky, as the Kentucky state legislature passed a bill prohibiting for-profit entities from recovering, processing, or distributing ocular tissue in a near-unanimous vote (House 94-0; Senate 34-1-1). This legislation was signed by Gov. Beshear on March 19, making Kentucky the first state to reaffirm the altruistic nature of donated eyes and ocular tissue.

Dr. Woodford Van Meter and Brad Tennant with Kentucky Lions Eye Bank were instrumental in guiding this milestone legislation to passage, and they have offered their insights and guidance to eye bankers in other states pursuing or considering similar legislation. Their efforts clearly illustrate how EBAA can help shape policy at large and within the eye banking and corneal transplantation profession.

# 40 YEARS OF THE CERTIFIED EYE BANK TECHNICIAN (CEBT) CERTIFICATION

During EBAA's Diamond Anniversary in 2021, we also celebrated 40 years of the Certified Eye Bank Technician (CEBT) certification.

Two members of the original CEBT class of 1981 are still active in eye banking today. Here is how earning and maintaining the CEBT certification has impacted their careers and lives.



*“These individuals’ hard work, dedication and commitment shines in the EBAA community.”*

## BETH BINNION, CEBT

Cincinnati Eye Bank, Quality Assurance

When Beth Binnion began her career in eye banking, the idea of being an “eye bank technician” was very new. Until that point at Cincinnati Eye Bank, medical school Residents were responsible for tissue recoveries. Over time, it was noticed that Residents often had conflicting on-call schedules, and patients understandably took priority over donors. The CEBT was created to develop a knowledgeable, well-trained group of recovery technicians who could complement or replace Residents.

After starting at the eye bank part-time in March 1981, Beth took the CEBT exam in the fall. She flew to Cleveland to take the training course and exam. She remembers Dr. Bill Reinhart, Medical Director for the Cleveland Eye Bank being the instructor for herself and about 20-30 other students, and the first eye banker she ever met outside of her own eye bank. She took the paper and pencil exam, and sent it off in the mail to be evaluated. Before the close of the year, she knew that she had passed.

Beth says, “Becoming a CEBT basically made my career. It helped me decide which way to go at that juncture and made me go full-time at the eye bank. It made a very big difference in deciding what I wanted to do and accomplish.”



When she is advising the next generation of eye bankers, Beth “absolutely recommends” becoming a CEBT. She says, “If you want to make eye banking a career, a CEBT is a necessity. It opens doors, gives you the ability to be on certain committees, and to progress at your eye bank... The profession has changed so much from when I started. CEBT has evolved along with it and continues to add new knowledge that CEBTs should know. There are exciting things on the horizon! No one ever thought preparation of tissue by a non-surgeon would even be possible years ago, and now we do it all!”

*“The CEBT opens doors.”*

## Original Class of CEBTs Profile:

### BILL PROCTOR, CEBT

Old Dominion Eye Foundation CEO/  
Executive Director

Bill Proctor “fell” into eye banking while working as a surgical assistant at a hospital in Washington, D.C. He helped with a corneal transplant and asked who did the removals. Bill was told about technicians and offered a job. He started doing eye recoveries part-time in 1977, and became the full-time Technical Director in 1978. By 1982, he was the Executive Director of the Old Dominion Eye Foundation in Richmond, VA.

As an original CEBT, he remembers being in class with Jim Martin and Doyce Williams. The first exam was take-home, and he mailed it in and awaited his results, but wasn’t anxious about passing. Earning the CEBT is what solidified eye banking as a career for Bill—something he originally “fell” into. He says, “It showed that this was a serious thing. It validated that technicians were valued. Before then, it wasn’t a ‘big deal.’”

Bill recommends the CEBT to those showing an interest in eye banking but notes that today’s exam is much harder than the one he took forty years ago. “It’s critical to get certified after a year or two. It gives a whole new perspective on eye banking and what we offer.”



Reflecting on the evolution of eye banking and being a CEBT, Bill recalls his eye bank having the first AIDS case, and the requirements put in place for donation afterwards. “EBAA has done a good job in expanding the knowledge base required for passing the exam, and I like the way it’s going.”

Bill says he is “fortunate” to be part of the first CEBT class and encourages every eye bank CEO to become a CEBT. “It has helped me so much over the years. I’ve always kept up with the technical side, and so much has changed over the years.”

*“It’s critical to get certified after a year or two. It gives a whole new perspective on eye banking and what we offer.”*

## CONCLUSION

We continue to pave the road for success, growth and education in 2022.

We have persevered through another year living during a global pandemic. We’ve continued to adjust, pivot, and shift to make sure the vital work of eye banking and corneal transplantation continues.

Reflecting on our past sixty years of leadership, innovation, and accomplishments, it is assured that our determination through COVID-19 will be an impressive chapter of our history account of the next six decades.

Our **Community of ComPASSION** remains steadfast, never losing focus on EBAA’s mission to restore sight worldwide. We move into a new year hopeful for a return to “normal” that is even more extraordinary than life was before the pandemic.



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