



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Heartland Lions Eye Banks Receives Award for Compassion**

**Columbia, Mo. (June 12, 2009)** – Heartland Lions Eye Banks has been honored by The Compassionate Friends as a recipient of the 2009 Compassionate Employer Recognition. The award was presented to Executive Director Ron Walkenbach and Springfield Branch Manager Pam Simpson by Barbara Starr, regional supervisor of The Compassionate Friends, on Tuesday, June 9, 2009.

The Compassionate Friends is the world's largest self-help bereavement organization, providing support and friendship to families that have experienced the death of a child. This year, 141 employers across the country are receiving Compassionate Employer Recognition for going above and beyond the normal policies of most companies in helping an employee after the death of a child.

The Eye Bank was nominated by Kharim Strayhorn, hospital services coordinator of the Springfield branch. After losing his son, Dante, to Necrotizing Enterocolitis, Strayhorn was touched by the support of his fellow Eye Bank team members who donated personal time and money for expenses as well as allowed him to maintain a flexible schedule.

“Because of the strong flow of compassion throughout my entire company, the transition required to manage life after losing a child was made markedly easier for our entire family,” remarked Strayhorn. “I decided to nominate the Eye Bank because of their incredible understanding and continued support. Without the assistance and understanding I received we surely would have lost a lot more. A sincere ‘thank you’ is due to the entire Eye Bank staff.”

Criteria for Compassionate Employer Recognition include, but are not limited to:

1. Allowing additional time off without loss of benefits.

2. Allowing flexible work schedules and assignments.
3. Allowing leeway in job performance standards.
4. Fostering an environment of mutual support among coworkers.
5. Providing professional grief counseling, human resources support or information regarding self-help bereavement organizations.
6. Other policies and practices that go beyond what is normal in the community.

“When a child dies, families begin a grief journey that follows them through all parts of their lives,” said Patricia Loder, Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends. “Today the need for support in the workplace so often takes a back seat to the demands of the marketplace. We are pleased that Heartland Lions Eye Banks is among those 141 employers, large and small, public and private, that are being recognized for providing the compassion and understanding that is vitally needed in the bereavement process.”

This is the ninth year for recognition of employers by The Compassionate Friends.

### **The Compassionate Friends**

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive. To contact The Compassionate Friends, call toll-free 877-969-0010 or visit the TCF national website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

### **Heartland Lions Eye Banks**

Heartland Lions Eye Banks, [www.hleb.org](http://www.hleb.org), is a division of the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation; a 501c(3) organization with the mission to preserve and restore the sight of people throughout Missouri and around the world. The Eye Bank operates seven branches throughout Missouri, Kansas and Illinois with headquarters in Columbia, Missouri. The Eye Bank is one of the five largest eye banks in the U.S. and offers high quality donor cornea tissue to transplant surgeons around the world. In addition the Eye Bank is committed to research for causes and cures for eye diseases.

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