



PRESS RELEASE

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For more information contact:
Nicole Plegge, PR Specialist
800.283.1982, ext. 115
nplegge@hleb.org

New Heartland Lions Eye Banks Branch Serves the Wichita Community

Eighth Location Will Assist Area Hospitals and Support Local Donor Families and Cornea Recipients

Wichita, Kan. (February 19, 2010) – In 2009, 272 Kansas cornea transplant recipients escaped a lifetime of blindness thanks to the generosity of their eye donors, the work of Heartland Lions Eye Banks (HLEB), and the support of Kansas and Missouri Lions clubs.

In conjunction with National Eye Donor Month (NEDM) this March and HLEB's 50th anniversary of partnering with Lions to give the gift of sight, the organization is excited to announce the opening of its new Wichita branch office – its eighth location in the region and its fourth serving Kansas hospitals.

“HLEB opened a branch in Wichita to better serve the hospitals and bring our community eye banking approach to the area,” remarked Tony Bavuso, Chief Operating Officer of HLEB. “We believe that donated eye tissue from this community should come back to this community for transplant as a first priority. We want to ensure that is happening by having a local office to better facilitate the recovery of donor tissue and the transplantation of that tissue back into the community.”

The new location, located at 9415 E. Harry St., Ste. 106 in Wichita, will be supervised by Frank Mull, Branch Manager and Hospital Services Coordinator. Mull possesses more than 30 years of managerial and technical experience through his work at Cessna Aircraft and has extensive experience in the realm of quality improvement and business strategy development.

The new branch is one more way HLEB is working closely with Lions Clubs throughout Kansas. Said Bavuso, “As the only Lions eye bank in the State of Kansas, we are excited to serve this community in a way that really reflects our ties to the Lions Club International organization and their longstanding commitment to sight restoration.”

During National Eye Donor Month, HLEB encourages Kansas residents to join the organization as Partners in Donation by pledging to become eye, organ and tissue donors. If you are older, have poor eyesight, or are afflicted with a non-communicable illness, eye donation may still be a viable option. In fact, 607 Kansas residents donated the gift of sight through HLEB last year alone.

Kansas residents can pledge to be eye, organ and tissue donors in one of two ways. You can visit www.mwtn.org/html/admin/donorregistry.pdf to download, print and complete the donor registration form or you can indicate your donation wishes when renewing or obtaining a Kansas driver's license.

About Heartland Lions Eye Banks

Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, Heartland Lions Eye Banks (HLEB) 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. Since its founding, HLEB has helped give the gift of sight to 33,000 people worldwide. HLEB operates eight branches throughout Kansas, Missouri and Illinois with headquarters in Columbia, Mo. HLEB is one of the five largest eye banks in the U.S. and offers high quality donor cornea tissue to transplant surgeons. In addition, HLEB is committed to research for causes and cures for eye diseases.

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