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West Virginia University  
EYE INSTITUTE

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Advancing Children's Vision

A Vision of Hope



## Restoring Vision: The Story of William Cihlar

*The WVU Eye Institute team restored William's vision as he faced the terrifying possibility of life without sight*

When country roads led William and Sharon Cihlar to Morgantown one snowy Saturday night last February, it wasn't to take in a WVU basketball game. Unfortunately, it was a far less enjoyable reason that brought the Bedford, Pa. couple across the West Virginia line.

Fitness instructor William Cihlar experienced a sudden and unusual change in his vision. Struck by fear as his condition worsened, his concerned wife rushed him to a local ophthalmologist. When the severity of his condition was realized, they instantly referred the couple to the WVU Eye Institute (WVUEI).

As they took treacherous roads to Morgantown, Bill's vision continued to deteriorate. The couple entered the WVUEI overwhelmed by stress at the prospect of Bill permanently losing his vision.

Fortunately, their fear and stress was quickly replaced with a sense of calmness. Despite the fact they arrived at a late hour on a hazardous Saturday night, the Eye Institute team arrived prepared to make every possible effort to save Bill's vision.

His immediate examination led to a diagnosis of a severe retinal detachment. He was quickly scheduled for surgery.

Bill's questions were many, and his medical team of Dr. Jamie Miller and ophthalmology resident Dr. Michael McAllister handled them with professionalism, courtesy, and honesty.

"They were so down-to-earth when talking with me throughout the whole procedure," said Bill. "They treated me as though I was a part of their extended family."

*(continued on page 3)*

## Champions of Care

*WVU Eye Institute's Retinal Team Sets Precedent for Superior Vision Care in West Virginia*

The WVUEI's retinal team has a big responsibility. The trio of Dr. Cris Larzo, Dr. Monique Leys, and Dr. Jamie Miller is charged with saving West Virginia's eye sight and preventing future vision loss, one patient at a time.

For those who suffer from retinal diseases, this trio provides more than one of the best diagnostic, care, and treatment options in the state. They also offer something that these patients can't put a price on—experiencing life through the gift of sight.

The WVUEI's retinal team has given hundreds of patients the ability to watch their children get married, witness the birth of their first grandchild, and experience the beauty of winter's first snow.

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*WVUEI Research Director, Dr. Ramamurthy (r) discusses vision research with colleagues Dr. Sokolov (l) and Dr. Odom (c).*

## WVUEI Research: Discovering Solutions in Retina Diseases & Disorders

### *Supporting future retina care with innovative research*

While the retinal medical and surgical group is responsible for the diagnosis and treatment of retinal diseases, there is another important team at the WVUEI who is responsible for understanding the causes of retinal degeneration and vision loss.

Based in the Vision Research Center, The WVUEI research team is responsible for conducting cutting-edge clinical and translational research involving all aspects of vision.

J. Vernon Odom, Ph.D, Visvanathan Ramamurthy, Ph.D, Max Sokolov, Ph.D, and clinical researcher Anthony Realini, M.D. MPH devote their days to researching everything from macular degeneration and glaucoma to the genetic basis of eye disease and deterioration. Each researcher leads their own unique projects designed to add significant contributions to the understanding and treatment of vision on a worldwide scale.

While the team investigates many blinding eye diseases and conditions, one particular focus is research conducted for retinal diseases and disorders.

As the research director for the WVUEI, Dr. Ramamurthy wears many hats. His primary role is to direct research in his laboratory funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH).

"We believe our research endeavors in understanding the fundamental mechanisms behind vision will be of great benefit to not only WVUEI patients, but to people around the world," said Dr. Ramamurthy.

One of the team's leading researchers in retina disease is Dr. Max Sokolov. He is currently devoting his research to the study of biochemistry and cell biology of photoreceptors--sensory neurons of the retina responsible for acquisition of visual information.

"The majority of vision loss—at least 80 percent—occurs as the result of a loss of photoreceptors," said Dr. Sokolov. "Losing photoreceptors means losing vision, period."

Dr. Sokolov's work may eventually lead to new treatments that the WVUEI's team of sub-specialty ophthalmologists will provide to patients.

## Celebrating 25 Years of Impact

### *Acclaimed Shott Chair of Ophthalmology reaches special milestone*

The summer of 2010 marked a special milestone for the WVU Eye Institute, as they celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jane McDermott Shott Chair of Ophthalmology.

The Shott Chair was established by Hugh Shott, Jr. in 1985 in honor of his wife, Morgantown native Jane McDermott Shott. Together, the couple had a personal interest in vision health that influenced their decision to establish the Chair.

Dr. Judie Charlton, chair of the WVU Department of Ophthalmology and current holder of the endowed chair, was honored to host representatives of the Hugh I. Shott, Jr. Foundation to commemorate the special anniversary. Foundation president R.W. "Buz" Wilkinson and board member John C. Shott—nephew of Hugh and Jane Shott—were welcomed to Morgantown with a visit and tour of the WVUEI.

"The Shott Chair has played a critical role in advancing the department's growth and success into becoming the WVUEI," said Dr. Charlton. "It is such an honor to recognize the 25 years of impact it has made with members of the Foundation's leadership."

The WVU Foundation also honored the Hugh I. Shott, Jr. Foundation with the 2010 Outstanding Philanthropic Foundation award during their visit to Morgantown.



*Chair of ophthalmology Judie Charlton, MD (center) is joined by John C. Shott (left) and "Buz" Wilkinson (right). Members of the Shott Foundation board of directors are pictured in front of the plaque recognizing the endowed chair.*



## Restoring Vision - Continued

Today, Bill's vision is restored. He credits the Eye Institute team for their exceptional care and expertise in saving his sight.

"They're one step away from being put on the Christmas list," joked Bill. "They always have a way of making you feel like you're their favorite."

His frightening ordeal and miraculous outcome has left William Cihlar more grateful than ever for the gift of vision and his team of champions that made restoring his sight a reality.

"God gives you two eyes, and I was facing blindness," said Bill. "I went from that to being able to see perfectly in both eyes. You can't put a price on that."

## Champions of Care - continued

From treating diabetics who are losing vision to genetic diseases and age-related macular degeneration, this team transforms the lives of patients through their expert treatment.

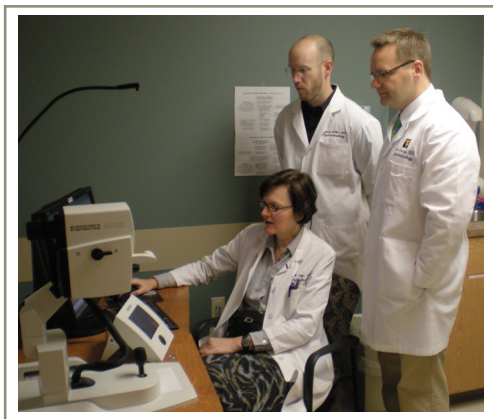
"We realize so many people in our state experience the realities of vision loss--especially baby boomers and diabetics," said Dr. Miller, who specializes in retinal and vitreoretinal diseases and surgery.

"They wouldn't have access to care without us," Dr. Miller continued. "The great amount of vision loss in older people in West Virginia is treated by our team."

"Taking care of diabetics in the state is one of the most important services the retinal team provides," agreed Dr. Larzo, who is interested in everything from pediatric retinal surgery to retinal detachments. "Getting them functional again is what we contribute to the most."

For this team, nothing is more important—or more rewarding—than their patients. Giving them the ability to see again and preventing additional vision loss is what puts value in coming to work every day.

"We chose this field because of the relationships we develop with the patients," said Dr. Miller. "It's rewarding to help people see again."



*The WVUEI Retinal Team collaborates to save and restore the vision of West Virginians.*

## A Generous Sight

*Patient Stephen Sterling expresses his gratitude for exemplary care with planned gift*



*WVUEI patient Stephen Sterling has Dr. Judie Charlton (L), and Dr. Charles Moore (R), among others, to thank for his vision.*

As Stephen Sterling can tell you, life includes many challenges. Fortunately, it can also provide ways to meet those challenges.

Since 1994, Steve has dealt with six retina detachments, astigmatism and glaucoma. His work with Dominion Resources in the Clarksburg area required a great deal of driving.

"You learn how much your vision means to you," Steve said. "And I know that I have Dr. Lionel Chisholm, Dr. Charles Moore, and Dr. Judie Charlton to thank for the vision I do have today."

"I was experiencing severe headaches. An appointment was made for me immediately, and they discovered the pressure in my left eye was very high. I was there for the majority of the day with staff caring for me and checking my pressure until it had stabilized," recalled Steve. "This care, I am sure, averted another detachment."

The ongoing gratitude Steve feels for this top-notch care motivated him to take out a life insurance policy that will benefit the Eye Institute in the future.

"I want the funds to be used for children's glasses and eye care," he mentioned. "I know the Eye Institute is really interested in helping meet children's special needs."

Steve's choice of a life insurance policy is only one option that can work well for an estate plan gift. Having your attorney include a gift provision in your will or revocable trust is another.

Designating the WVU Foundation as the beneficiary of a retirement account to support the Eye Institute, setting up a special gift that pays retirement income for life, or donating the after-death rights to your home are also beneficial ways to support the Eye Institute's future.

"I would not trust my eyes to anyone else," said Steve. "I've provided for my family and the Eye Institute through my estate plans. I'm proud to be able to do that."

For more information about supporting the WVUEI through your estate plans, please call 304.598.4843.



## Make a Resolution of Hope!

*Consider making a New Year's resolution to save vision by supporting the Annual Vision Fund*

The wake of the holiday season has surely left many of us feeling fortunate and hopeful as we reflect on the gifts of family, friends, health and a new year.

As you consider your New Year's resolutions, the WVUEI encourages you to consider resolving to spread hope to the thousands of patients who will look to us for treatment in 2011.

Making a donation to the WVUEI's Annual Vision Fund is a wonderful way to honor a family member, friend, physician, or loved one. Your donation has the ability to save the vision of a patient who cannot afford eye care.

Donors who contribute \$500 or more will be recognized with a special first edition "Gift of Hope" print created by grateful patient and artist Maggie Pratt.

To make YOUR generous tax-deductible gift and transform lives through improved vision, visit [www.wvueye.com](http://www.wvueye.com) or call 304.598.4843.

## Announcements

The WVUEI would like to extend congratulations to Dr. Jennifer Sivak-Calcott and Dr. John Nguyen for attaining ACGME accreditation approval for the oculoplastics fellowship program. This is a selective designation that has put West Virginia in the national spotlight.

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WVUEI graduate research assistant Jeff Christiansen was recently awarded a travel fellowship to the American Society for Cell Biology.

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**SAVE the DATE**  
17th Annual Spring CME Conference  
Honoring A Legacy of Care in West Virginia  
Saturday, April 2, 2011  
More details to come!



**1 Stadium Drive, P.O. Box: 9193,  
Morgantown, WV 26505-9193  
304.598.4820  
WVUEYE.com**

 Check out the WVU Eye Institute on Facebook for news and special events!

*"The mission of the West Virginia University Eye Institute is to restore vision and prevent blindness"*