



**LIONS SIGHT FOUNDATION
OF VIRGINIA, INC.**

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**SERVICE
AND
EYE RESEARCH**



Fighting the Darkness

*Lions Sight Foundation speeds research
to combat blindness*

In 1925, activist Helen Keller addressed the Lions Club, challenging those present to become “Knights of the Blind in the Crusade against Darkness.” Since that challenge, service to the blind and visually impaired is one of the organizations’s most significant activities. The tireless efforts across the nation have helped thousands receive eye examinations and eyeglasses who might not otherwise be able to afford them.

The first Eye Bank began on December 10, 1957. It is known as the Elbyrne G. Gill Eye and Ear Foundation. There have been seven name changes down through the years with the current name being The Lions Sight Foundation of Virginia Inc. A Board of Directors consisting of Lions has always governed the eye bank. The Eye Bank remains basically the same as in the beginning. The thing that has changed is technology. Lions of District 24-C, E, & F worked hard to get eye banking off the ground, successful in 1972 the present building at 501 Elm Ave., Roanoke, VA was built. Lions supported the eye bank from 1971 until June 3, 1992; at this time all services formally provided by the Eye Bank were merged with the Old Dominion Eye Foundation in Richmond, VA.

Now, the Lions sight Foundation of Virginia Inc. is advancing the search for a cure for macular degeneration at UVA, the most common cause of blindness in the US. The foundation has made a generous grant of

\$200,000 to support transnational research and development of new techniques for diagnosing and treating the disease.

Macular degeneration occurs when the macula, which is located in the center of the retina and provides us with sight into the center of our field of vision, begins to degenerate. With less of the macula working, central vision— which is necessary for driving, reading, recognizing faces, and performing close-up work—begins to deteriorate. After World War II, new ways to image, or photograph, the eye were developed, allowing doctors to measure the progression of the disease. But for 30 years, no further substantial advances were made. Now that’s changing.

“Age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma are the the most serious blinding conditions in the U.S.,” explains the chair of UVA’S Department of Ophthalmology. “Fortunately, there are a number of new treatments becoming available to treat these diseases. New instruments are being developed to study the condition with such sensitivity and resolution that they make a ‘living biopsy’ of the eye possible.”

This new generation of instruments, based primarily on computer technology, is speeding advances in clinical research. The support of the Lions Sight Foundation will allow UVA and their team to purchase and refine advanced imaging equipment. This equipment will provide the team with high resolution images of the eye allowing them to detect subtle changes in the eye’s tissue. Doctors will now be able to diagnose and measure degeneration earlier and easier, without subjecting the patient to uncomfortable testing. They will also be able to closely monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of new treatments for the diseases.

“We are proud to partner with the UVA Health System to combat blindness.” These innovations have the potential to lead to new and better treatments for macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and Glaucoma fighting blindness before it begins.

The Sight Foundation has provided Titmus Machines for schools in the Districts for vision screening for school children. The state of Virginia requires this for all the schools in Virginia. There is a rather high demand for the use of these machines.

The Sight Foundation provides Photo screeners to be used to screen the vision of children of kindergarten age and below. These machines are extremely valuable in detecting vision problems in the very early stages.