

in focus

SPRING 2010

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS

Discovering Vision-Saving Drugs

State-of-the-art screening technologies help identify drugs with the potential for slowing or even halting vision loss

IF YOU ARE affected by a retinal degenerative disease, imagine visiting your eye doctor and receiving a prescription for a pill or an eye drop that stops your vision loss.

That day is closer to becoming a reality thanks to the advent of state-of-the-art screening technologies, which Foundation-funded researchers are using to more rapidly identify drugs with the potential for slowing or even halting vision loss from a wide range of retinal degenerative diseases.

For example, Bärbel Rohrer, Ph.D., a Foundation-funded researcher from the Medical University of South Carolina, is employing high-throughput screening technology, which combines robotics, data processing systems, and sensitive detectors, to identify compounds with vision-saving properties.

Specifically, Dr. Rohrer and her colleague Craig Beeson, Ph.D., are looking for compounds that would enhance mitochondrial function in retinal cells. Mitochondria regulate energy balance for cells, and Drs. Rohrer and Beeson noted that mitochondrial function is often significantly reduced in people with a wide range of retinal degenerative diseases.

Screening a library of 50,000 compounds, their lab found two that significantly enhance mitochondrial function. Their lab tested the first compound in a mouse model of retinal disease with excellent results; the mice demonstrated a significant increase in retinal sensitivity. After further testing, the team hopes to move the compound into a

human study. Their lab is about to begin animal tests of the second compound.

In another Foundation-funded drug discovery project, Don Zack, M.D., Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, is using high-throughput screening to identify molecules and factors that will promote: 1) the function and survival of photoreceptors, 2) the ability of photoreceptors to provide vision, and 3) the differentiation of stem cells into photoreceptors for transplantation.

Imagine visiting your eye doctor and receiving a prescription for a pill or an eye drop that stops your vision loss. That day is closer to becoming a reality.

In addition to using Foundation-funded screening systems at Johns Hopkins, Dr. Zack will be collaborating with Drs. Christopher Austin, James Inglese, and Douglas Auld at the National Institutes of Health Chemical Genomics Center (NCGC) to identify compounds that show potential as retinal treatments. He notes that NCGC's advanced technology will enable him to screen hundreds of thousands of compounds in one week — an effort that would otherwise take the Hopkins team at least 10 years to complete.

In a Foundation-funded project at the Institute de la Vision-INSERM in Paris, France, Thierry Léveillard, Ph.D., is screening 800 biologically diverse plant extracts to identify molecules that protect cones. Thus far, he has identified seven molecules showing potential as therapeutic agents.

Stephen Rose, Ph.D., chief research officer of the Foundation Fighting Blindness, says that once promising compounds are identified through screening, animal studies will help researchers better understand

the compound's safety, efficacy, and clinical potential. He adds, "Once the researchers find a molecule with vision-saving properties, they need to determine the best way to administer the drug, perhaps orally or as eye drops,

and what dosing regimen will be most effective. Then we can move the drug into human studies."

Dr. Rose adds that the Foundation is positioned to quickly begin clinical studies of pharmacological agents thanks to the establishment of the National Eye Evaluation Research network — a five-site, nationwide clinical trial network that is equipped with the personnel and resources to launch human studies of drugs and other treatment approaches. •

in focus SPRING 2010

InFocus is published by:
Foundation Fighting Blindness, Inc.
 11435 Cronhill Drive
 Owings Mills, Maryland 21117-2220

FFB Board of Directors—Officers

Gordon Gund, *Chairman*
 Jeremiah H. Shaw, Sr., *Vice Chairman*
 Edward H. Gollob, *President*
 Joel P. Davis, *Senior Vice President*
 David B. Brint, *Vice President*
 Haynes P. Lea, *Vice President & Treasurer*
 Yvonne E. Chester, *Secretary*

FFB National Management Staff

William T. Schmidt, *Chief Executive Officer*
 James W. Minow, *Chief Development Officer*
 Stephen Rose, Ph.D., *Chief Research Officer*
 Annette Hinkle, CPA, *Chief Financial Officer*
 Patricia Dudley, *Chief Human Resources Officer*
 Steven Bramer, Ph.D., *Chief Drug Development Officer*

FFB Staff Editorial Board

Maria Costa
 Richard Faubion
 Jennifer Hecker
 Tim Marabella
 David Neumann
 Ben A. Shaberman
 Anastasia Staten
 Angela Vasquez

FFB InFocus Newsletter Staff

Angela Vasquez, *Director, Comm. and Mktg.*
 Ben A. Shaberman, *Senior Editor*

Design + Production: MSK Partners
 All articles by Ben A. Shaberman
 unless otherwise noted.

Any products and/or services mentioned within *InFocus* are presented as a source of information and should not be misinterpreted as a recommendation of the Foundation. The Foundation has not tested or evaluated the products reported upon to determine their safety or effectiveness.

For a copy of this publication, write to *InFocus* at the above address, or call 800-683-5555 (toll free); 800-863-5551 (for deaf). Or visit us on the Internet at www.FightBlindness.org.

Physicians differ in their approach to incorporating research results into their clinical practice. You should always consult with and be guided by your physician's advice when considering treatment based on research results.



Foundation Fighting Blindness™

Driving research to save & restore sight

© Foundation Fighting Blindness 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Now is the Time

William T. Schmidt, *Chief Executive Officer, Foundation Fighting Blindness*

AT THE FOUNDATION'S Day of Science meeting last February in Los Angeles, Gordon Gund, our chairman and co-founder, made



a simple but profound statement at a gathering of our key leaders. He said, "Now is the time, and it is up to us."

Gordon explained that the success we are now having in

clinical trials, and the progress we are making toward launching new human studies, has been 40 years in the making. However, there is not a person affected with vision loss, or their family members, who wants to wait another 40 years to reach our goal of eradicating all retinal degenerative diseases.

bolster our fundraising potential. Three fundamental issues were addressed during the launch meeting:

- 1) How the Foundation can recruit more trustees and active leaders,
- 2) How trustees can rally more financial support within their networks and communities, and
- 3) How we can use the latest tools and resources available for individual fundraising and donor development.

At the gathering, Bob Bason, a highly experienced and knowledgeable fundraising consultant, spoke to a group of our leaders and volunteers about these approaches to revenue development, and what each of us can do to enhance our ability to raise money.

We also received great input and perspectives from some of the Foundation's own leaders who presented at the meeting. They included: Steve Alper, national trustee;

Whether you are a donor who can give \$50, \$500, \$5,000, or more, you are an important member of the Foundation's family, because you know first-hand the urgency we have for treatments and cures.

Thanks to the sustained commitment of our volunteer leaders and donors, we are at an incredibly hopeful juncture. Over the decades, Foundation-funded research have found disease-causing genes, gained a better understanding of how vision is lost, developed animal models of retinal diseases, and most excitingly, have identified vision-saving treatments which are showing strong clinical potential.

Yet, the cost of human studies is enormous, and we still have numerous, critical, basic research opportunities that we greatly need to exploit. It is now incumbent upon us as an organization and a community to bring our research funding to a much higher level, so that we aren't waiting another 40 years for vision-saving cures.

In response to the challenge that lies ahead, the Foundation launched a Trustee Leadership and Development Plan at Day of Science to discuss strategies and tactics to

Joel Davis, board vice president; Ed Gollob, board president; Jim McNeil, board director; and Eddie Russnow, board director.

I look forward to reporting more on our Trustee and Leadership Development plan as it is launched across the country through our chapter network.

Whether you are a donor who can give \$50, \$500, \$5,000, or more, you are an important member of the Foundation's family, because you know first-hand the urgency we have for treatments and cures. No one else is going to do this job for us. As Gordon said, "Now is the time, and it is up to us."

Thanks for your generous and passionate support.

Sincerely,

**DRIVE THE RESEARCH.
 BE THE LIGHT.**

Give now at www.FightBlindness.org



Times Square: Our Name in Lights

If you happen to be in New York City during the month of May, pay a visit to Times Square and you may see a familiar sight

THE FIGHT AGAINST blindness has reached Times Square! Digital ads promoting the Foundation Fighting Blindness and VisionWalk will run on the massive electronic screens on the Thomson Reuters and NASDAQ buildings for a full month this spring. The ads will run for 30 seconds, two to three times every hour beginning in early May.

On display in one of the most sought-after advertising markets in the world, the ads have terrific potential for raising international awareness of the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the need for increased funding for blindness research. A sign in Times Square is estimated to receive 1.5 million impressions per day. Not only do 500,000 people pass through Times Square daily, there are also more than 10 million viewers who see live shots of Times Square through nationally televised programs, such as “Good Morning America.”

The seven-story NASDAQ screen will feature a heartwarming photo of Sela Cornell,

a young girl who is blind from Leber congenital amaurosis, while the Reuters screens, made up of several displays that wrap around the front of the building, will feature a five-ad campaign promoting VisionWalk and the walk taking place in New York City on Sunday, May 23.

In addition to spreading critical awareness, these ads will kick-off the Foundation’s new mobile texting campaign. By texting the word “VISION” to 25383, passersby on Times Square will be able to make an immediate \$10 donation to the Foundation and blindness research.

The Foundation is fortunate to have received this tremendous promotional opportunity pro bono, courtesy of Thomson Reuters. Special thanks to Dave Jenson and his team who manage the screens through Times Square², and to Michelle Veloce, a dedicated Foundation volunteer in New York City. It was directly through Michelle’s committed efforts that the Foundation was provided this opportunity. ●

Stem Cell Researchers Recognized for Accelerating Advancements

THOUGH STEM CELLS are still a relatively new approach to treating retinal degenerative diseases and a host of other conditions, the progress in this scientific field has been stunning in the last five years. Embryonic stem cells, and more recently skin cells, have both been used to develop photoreceptors and other retinal cell types. Related treatments have been shown to be effective in saving and restoring vision in animals, and clinical trials of stem cell-based retinal therapies are close at hand.

At the Day of Science luncheon, four Foundation-funded investigators were honored with the Foundation’s Board of Directors Award for their outstanding success in the

development of stem cell treatments. Honorees were: Dr. David Gamm of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Ray Lund of Oregon Health & Science University, Dr. Thomas Reh of the University of Washington, and Dr. Michael Young of Harvard Medical School. ●



(Left to right) Dr. Michael Young, David Brint, Gordon Gund, Dr. Stephen Rose, Ed Gollob, Dr. Ray Lund, and Dr. David Gamm.

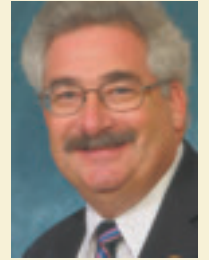
FOCUS ON A CURE

Advancements

Retinal Innovation Symposium Connects Key Research and Investment Leaders

By Stephen Rose, Ph.D., *Chief Research Officer, Foundation Fighting Blindness*

IT’S ALWAYS a great moment when a researcher in a laboratory finds a treatment that demonstrates strong potential for saving or restoring vision. I know when we report on these advancements, they give you, our donors and volunteers, tremendous hope and justifiably so.



The question that arises for us next is: “How do we get this potential treatment into a clinical trial and out to the people who need it?” The question is simple, but obtaining the answer requires a considerable amount of knowledge, strategic planning, resources, and collaboration.

The Foundation Fighting Blindness recently hosted the 3rd Annual Retinal Innovation Symposium in Orange County, California, which brought together leading retinal experts, venture capitalists, biopharmaceutical companies, and biomedical entrepreneurs from around the country to help us answer that big question.

It was highly advantageous for the Foundation to have these communities come together to discuss the advancement of treatments and cures for retinal degenerative diseases. We need to collaborate well with these groups, and exchange information and knowledge, to get vision-saving treatments out to the market and the people who need them.

The discussions and presentations during the symposium helped us better understand:

- 1) How to attract venture capital for advancing a treatment into the clinic,
- 2) What it takes to navigate the clinical trial and FDA-approval processes,
- 3) Big pharma’s and biotech’s views of retinal degenerative disease market opportunities, and
- 4) Successes and challenges experienced by companies in the advancement of treatments.

The symposium also featured a series of presentations and panel sessions on research, new products, and business ventures. The morning program included presentations from retinal researchers and early stage biotech and pharmaceutical companies. The afternoon program began with presentations from early stage medical device companies, which were followed by panel discussions with representatives from pharmaceutical companies and venture capital firms.

I’d like to thank our symposium co-chairs for organizing and facilitating an outstanding program.

Our co-chairs were: William J. Link, Ph.D., the managing director of the healthcare venture capital firm Versant Ventures, and Baruch Kuppermann, M.D., Ph.D., chief of the retina service, and vice chair for clinical research at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute at the University of California, Irvine. ●

Day of Science 2010

Researchers Prepare for New Clinical Trials

THE NEWS COMING from the Foundation's 2010 Day of Science meeting in Los Angeles was outstanding. Over the past year, the Foundation-funded retinal research community has made substantial progress toward launching several new clinical trials of treatments for an expanding spectrum of retinal degenerative diseases.



Myrna Goldberg with Gordon and Lulie Gund

Several New Gene Therapy Clinical Trials in Planning Stages

Thanks to the success in vision-restoring gene therapy clinical trials for Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA) over the past two years, several human studies of gene therapy are scheduled to begin within the next year or two. As Dr. Bill Hauswirth, an LCA clinical trial investigator from the University of Florida, said, "No one is stopping here. New gene therapies are on the way.

Hauswirth, began his update on human studies of gene therapy by noting that all 25 participants in four gene therapy clinical studies for Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA2, RPE65 gene) are doing well. All had only their worse-seeing eye treated, which has now become their better-seeing eye. As expected, all participants now want their second eye to be treated, and trial investigators are working with the FDA to get approval to do so.

As a result of the success in these human studies, the following gene therapy clinical trials are scheduled to begin within the next year or two:

- Wet age-related macular degeneration
- Stargardt disease
- Achromatopsia
- X-linked retinoschisis

Dr. Hauswirth noted that clinical trials of gene therapy for the following conditions are about two to four years away:

- X-linked retinitis pigmentosa
- Autosomal dominant retinitis pigmentosa
- Blue cone monochromacy
- LCA1
- Usher syndrome 1B

Dr. Hauswirth, the lead developer of adeno-associated virus (AAV) technology for gene delivery, also noted that enhancements to AAV delivery are being made regularly, and in addition, lentiviruses and nanoparticles are also emerging as effective gene delivery vehicles with uniquely beneficial properties.

Dr. Hauswirth is funded by the Foundation's Wynn-Gund Translational Research Acceleration Program and other Foundation grants.

The Role of Genetic Testing in Finding Treatments and Cures

Stephen Daiger, Ph.D., of the University of Texas Health Science Center Houston, reported that innovations in gene identification technologies are now occurring at a remarkably impressive rate; he predicts that in the next two to four years, the technology

pigmentosa, 30 for autosomal recessive retinitis pigmentosa, 14 for Leber congenital amaurosis, and 11 for Usher syndrome. Thirteen genes have been linked to age-related macular degeneration (AMD), though it is a complex disease, and most people develop AMD due to multiple genetic and lifestyle factors.

Dr. Daiger emphasized the importance of gene identification in: 1) predicting a person's visual prognosis, 2) the inheritance pattern for the disease within their family, and 3) which emerging treatments may be of most benefit.

He added that each new gene identified significantly increases the body of knowledge about the retina, why vision loss occurs, and what treatment targets may save and restore vision.

Several of Dr. Daiger's projects are funded by the Foundation.

"No one is stopping here. New gene therapies are on the way."

— Dr. Bill Hauswirth, LCA clinical trial investigator

will be 10 times more powerful than it is today. He added that there are now two to three dozen labs around the world for retina-related genetic testing versus four in the 1980s.

To date, just over 200 genes have been linked to retinal degenerative diseases, a vast majority of which have been found through Foundation-funded research. Dr. Daiger gave the following examples of gene counts by disease: 20 for autosomal dominant retinitis

Stem Cell Research for Saving and Restoring Vision

Michael Young, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School, began his presentation by reviewing the many different stem cell types that have been studied for the treatment of retinal degenerative diseases including: embryonic stem cells, fetal tissue, neural cells, and retinal progenitors and precursors (cells that have not fully developed into retinal cells).



Carl and Sherri Kroonenberg and Scott Burt of the Denver Chapter

Dr. Young noted that researchers have now developed photoreceptors from stem cells and transplanted them in mice to restore vision, effectively replacing photoreceptors lost to disease.

In a planned clinical trial, Advanced Cell Technology will use RPE cells derived from embryonic stem cells and use them as a treatment for people with Stargardt disease. In people with Stargardt disease and dry age-related macular degeneration, toxic waste products buildup in the RPE cells causing them to degenerate and adding new RPE-like cells will slow, if not stop, these toxic products from causing retinal death.



Dr. Young also presented a new type of treatment that is employing induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS). Using genetic engineering, proteins, or even chemicals, researchers are now able to take skin cells and turn back the clock on their development, converting them into embryonic stem cells. From there, the cells can be coaxed into becoming retinal tissue. The advantage of iPS is that a person's own cells can be used as their treatment, potentially negating the need to derive stem cell treatments from embryos.

The Foundation funds Dr. Young and other investigators working on a variety of stem cell research projects including those involving iPS, embryonic stem cells, and other stem cells.

Rescuing Photoreceptors with Stem Cells

Ray Lund, Ph.D., of the Oregon Health & Sciences University, also reported on his Foundation-funded project where a type of stem cells, called neural progenitor cells, are used to restore vision in a mouse model of Usher syndrome type 2A. Never before has a cell-based treatment been used to save vision in an Usher syndrome study, in large part because no other Usher syndrome animal models have exhibited vision loss or retinal degeneration.

He noted that the treatment preserved vision in the mice at an early stage of disease making it potentially effective as a preventive approach for humans affected by a range of retinal degenerative conditions. He and his team are continuing to research this treatment approach with the hope of moving it into a clinical trial.

Partnerships are Accelerating the Clinical Development of Treatments and Cures

Steve Bramer, Ph.D., chief drug development officer of the Foundation's National Neurovision Research Institute, discussed some of the promising clinical partnerships he is building and pursuing.

Dr. Bramer provided an update on the Foundation's partnership with Oxford BioMedica, a developer of lentiviral gene therapies in the U.K. The company is working toward the launch of a European clinical trial of StarGen™ for Stargardt disease by the end of 2010, as well as a clinical trial of UshStat™ for Usher syndrome type 1B in 2011.

The Foundation partnership with the Irish company Genable is proceeding well as they develop a gene therapy for adRP caused by variations in the Rhodopsin gene. They are working toward the launch of a clinical trial in 2011. Their treatment approach is a two-step process: it knocks down the defective gene and inserts a new, healthy gene.

The Foundation established the National Neurovision Research Institute to accelerate the advancement of promising treatments and cures into clinical trials.

The Benefits of High-Tech Imaging in the Advancement of Retinal Treatments

Jacque Duncan, M.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, presented and described the latest in high-resolution retinal imaging. She is working with a technology called Adaptive Optics Scanning Laser Ophthalmoscopy (AOSLO), which enables researchers and clinicians to observe individual cone photoreceptors in a person's retina. Never before have experts been able to see the living human retina in such detail, and the innovative imaging technology is becoming a powerful diagnostic tool.



Dr. Duncan is using AOSLO imaging to better determine the effect of ciliary neurotrophic factor (CNTF) that is being delivered by an encapsulated cell technology in clinical studies being conducted by Neurotech Corporation.

She noted that CNTF is a protein that has been shown to slow vision loss in over a dozen different animal models of retinal degeneration, as well as people with dry age-related macular degeneration. In clinical trials of the treatment for people with inherited retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa

and Usher syndrome, vision preservation has not been observed as of yet — the trials are ongoing. However, investigators have seen an increase in retinal thickness in these participants, which may be indicative of healthier and more plentiful photoreceptors.

Dr. Duncan said that a challenge in measuring the effectiveness of Neurotech's treatment is that vision loss for many people with inherited diseases progresses slowly, and therefore it may take several years to detect the treatment's ability to preserve vision, a view shared by many investigators conducting the clinical trial. AOSLO imaging may be a way to get a better sense of the treatment's effectiveness in the short term.



Dr. Duncan used AOSLO imaging to measure cone spacing in two Neurotech clinical trial participants — one with retinitis pigmentosa and one with Usher syndrome. She is working to validate that the space between cones may be a good indicator of retinal health — the less space between cones, the better.

Dr. Duncan and her collaborators will be presenting the results of AOSLO imaging in several patients in the Neurotech clinical trial for early stage retinitis pigmentosa at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology annual meeting in May 2010.

Both Dr. Duncan and the Neurotech clinical studies are being funded by the Foundation.

Identifying Vision-Saving Compounds

Bärbel Rohrer, Ph.D., of the Medical University of South Carolina, reported on her success in finding vision-saving drugs using high-throughput screening technology. Her research is featured on the front page of this newsletter.

A Special Thanks

The Foundation is grateful to the 20 researchers who took time out of their busy schedules to join us in Los Angeles to participate in the 2010 Day of Science and update our leadership and donors on the latest in retinal research.

We would also like to thank the many scientists and clinician-researchers from around the world who are currently working on 130 Foundation-funded grants. Thanks to their passion, ingenuity, and tireless dedication, we move closer to sight-saving cures every day. ●

VISIONS2011

Mark your calendars! The highly anticipated VISIONS Conference will return next year!

We are pleased to announce the return of the Foundation's VISIONS Conference. As in previous years, you can expect a wonderful experience at VISIONS 2011, where you will:

- Hear the **latest news** in retinal disease research
- Have **your questions answered** in our "The Doctor Is In" sessions
- **Improve your daily living** skills through information and coping sessions
- Meet and network with **FFB members and leaders** from across the country
- Learn of the **best in low vision products, aids and services**

More about VISIONS 2011 to come! Visit www.FightBlindness.org periodically to get the latest information.

Stories of Hope



Jennifer and Troy Stevens with their sons Gavin (left) and Landon.

Gavin's Groupies

Searching for Answers, Finding Hope

WHEN JENNIFER STEVENS' newborn boy Gavin was just a day old and still in the hospital, her intuition was telling her that something wasn't quite right. Physically, he looked fine. He had all his fingers and toes, he was breathing well, and results from all of his tests were normal. The doctors said that little Gavin was doing very well. But something kept nagging at Jennifer. Her husband, Troy, chalked it up to the medication she was taking for pain.

But after they brought Gavin home, Jennifer's fears continued to build. "Something just wasn't right and it seemed to be something with his eyes," recalls Jennifer. "When my older son, Landon, was born, he just stared at me. He was a very alert baby and looked around a lot. But Gavin wasn't doing that."

For the next several weeks, doctors continued to say that Gavin was ok, despite Jennifer's observations. At the three-month check-up, the Stevens refused to accept that everything was fine with their little boy. Jennifer recalls, "By now, my husband started to pick up on what I was noticing, but the doctor said let's give it until the fourth month. Well, that didn't sit well for me. I was a mess. So, I called the doctor back and said I needed the name of an eye specialist."

The Stevens received a referral to a pediatric ophthalmologist, who determined immediately that something was absolutely not right. He said that Gavin had very little, if any, vision. Two weeks later, Gavin was examined by Dr. Thomas Lee, a pediatric retina specialist at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. Jennifer says that they felt very

secure with Dr. Lee, because he sat down and explained everything to them. Dr. Lee characterized Gavin as having a retinal dystrophy, which was likely Leber congenital amaurosis, an inherited retinal disease that results in severe vision loss at birth.

"To go from not knowing anything to having a little understanding was huge," says Jennifer. "Before, we didn't know if Gavin was sick or had a serious neurological disorder."

Through Internet searches, Jennifer came across the Foundation Fighting Blindness. She and her family immediately became involved in the Foundation's signature fundraising event, VisionWalk, and raised \$9,000 for research at the Orange County walk in 2009.

Jennifer says that getting involved with the Foundation was a major turning point for her. "Though it was very emotional for me, I felt that VisionWalk was a way to make something positive out of the situation. It really turned into a great outlet for me as a mom. The Foundation gives me a place to do that. I am very thankful for the opportunity to be a part of such an inspiring, motivating group of people."

The Stevens also participated in the Foundation's 2010 Orange County Dining in the Dark, a fundraising dinner during which guests eat their meal in complete darkness and experience, if only for a moment, what it is like to live with vision loss.

It has been a long road for the Stevens throughout their son's young life, but the answers and hope they have found through the Foundation Fighting Blindness have given them comfort and optimism. ●



"I've joined the Race to Cure Blindness because I want to be part of finding a cure."

MICHAEL STONE
10-TIME IRONMAN FINISHER,
3RD PLACE XTERRA DIVISION
WORLD CHAMPION

Easily turn any race into an opportunity to raise money for the Foundation Fighting Blindness.

Our researchers are on the verge of breakthroughs that will transform the lives of millions of Americans.

Your participation will help cure blindness – let that be a reminder as you train everyday.

**No fundraising requirements
& no participation fee**

**Enter and qualify for the
event of your choice**

**The money you raise goes
toward helping find a cure**

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!

www.RaceToCureBlindness.org

Calling All Walkers

VisionWalk: Celebrating Five Years and \$11 Million in Sight-Saving Research

The Foundation congratulates more than a thousand walk teams from across the country that have worked tirelessly to raise money and awareness over the past five years. The following stories highlight the passion and determination of three teams that have been with VisionWalk since the beginning, and in some cases, before the beginning.

BECKER'S BRIGADE

Orange County, California

"I didn't know that fundraising would be my calling as a blind woman, but it is," says Linda

Becker. She found the Foundation Fighting Blindness nearly 10 years ago after signing up for the People and Paws walk, a VisionWalk predecessor, in Orange County. Through her early walk experience,

Linda discovered a strong sense of community, hope, and support that has kept her coming back year after year. Now as the VisionWalk team captain of Becker's Brigade, Linda is a fundraising machine using letter writing campaigns, e-mails, business cards and her VisionWalk t-shirt to share her story and recruit donors and walkers. There is no doubt that Becker's Brigade's efforts have paid off; the team has raised nearly \$35,000 and registered 123 people for the Orange County VisionWalk over the last four years. Linda exclaims, "How does it feel to do what I do? It feels great! It fills me up." •



GETTIN' JAMIE WITH IT

Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, North Carolina

When Reston Turner volunteered for a Foundation Fighting Blindness event in college, little did she know that raising money for vision research would one day be "her calling." Not long after college, Reston began dating James Mattox, who is affected by Usher syndrome. When she became Reston Mattox, the couple's fundraising efforts kicked into full gear. James and Reston were instrumental in bringing VisionWalk to the Triangle region of North Carolina and the couple has been one of the event's biggest supporters over the last five years, raising more than \$100,000. While James has been very successful in signing up corporate sponsors through his business connections, Reston reaches out in the community through letter writing campaigns, social media, e-mails



and chapter involvement. Reston's fundraising advice: "Don't be afraid to ask. People are afraid to ask for money, the worst that can happen is they will say 'no,' but people will often surprise you." •

LAKE MARY PREP SCHOOL

SIGHT SEEKERS

Orlando, Florida

Soon after the Suris' son, Edgar, was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, the family feared there was no chance of ever finding a cure for him. But then Teresa, his mom, received a package of information — and hope — from the Orlando Chapter of the Foundation Fighting Blindness. The Suris Family discovered all the ways that the Foundation was driving research, including a local VisionWalk in Orlando. The family had only six weeks to form a walk team and fundraise for that first Orlando VisionWalk. But by walk day, they ended up with 54 team members who raised nearly \$9,000 for vision research. Over the past five years Teresa's team, Lake Mary Prep School Sight Seekers, has been one of the Foundation's outstanding fundraising teams, recruiting as many as 101 team members for a single walk. Teresa has found countless ways to raise money including: bake sales, car washes, community yard sales, and school candy grams. Teresa's fundraising motto: "All you need is two hands and friends." •



"Don't be afraid to ask. People are afraid to ask for money, the worst that can happen is they will say 'no,' but people will often surprise you."

Congratulations VisionWalk Five-Year Teams

Chicago

- Bednarz Boyz
- The Blind Man Group
- Eye Walk for A Cure
- Nadine Weber Team
- Naperville Walkers
- S.O.S. (Spirit of Seoul)
- Team Creviston's VisionQuest
- Team DeMarco- Fighting Illin "eyes"
- Unite 4 Sight
- Vision For the Future
- Walking to See

Northern Kentucky

- The Chadwick Clan
- Drew's Crew
- Feisty Feet
- Team Tim

Northern Virginia

- Bruce's Blazers
- Bull's Eye Team
- Dan's Clan

- Friedrich Family
- Garrett's Gaggle
- Jo's Vision Walkers
- Luehrs Racing Team
- Seeing is Believing
- Walking with Lucia
- The Wild Bunch

Orange County

- AMO Sight Savers
- Becker's Brigade
- Sean's Stars
- Tuesday's Troopers

Orlando

- Lake Mary Prep Sight Seekers
- Ramirez & Poulos
- Schott Blindbusters
- Sight for Sore Eyes
- Team Dancer's Pointe
- Team Townsend

South Florida

- Comprehensive Health Care
- Florida Reading & Vision Technology
- LCVIS Team
- Mel's Magic
- NSU College of Optometry
- Retinal Transformers
- South Andrews Sight Savers
- Seminole Tribe of Florida

Triangle

- 4 Olivia and Evan
- Eyes Have It
- Gettin' Jamie With It
- Lemmon Aid
- Stormin' Ormands
- Team GMP
- Weather Together



Congratulations to all five-year walk teams! For a complete list of five-year teams, visit www.VisionWalk.org



Driving research to save & restore sight

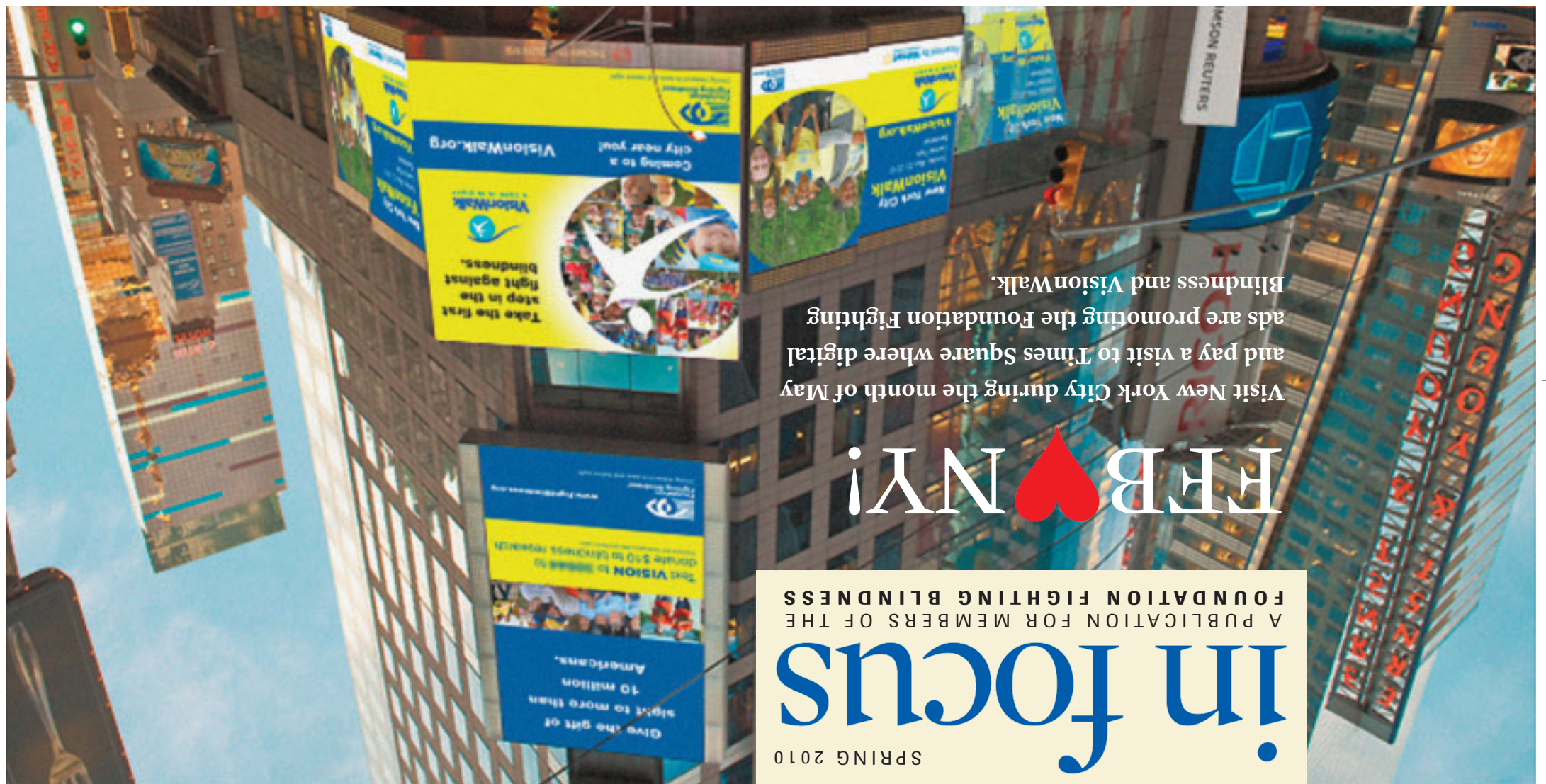
InFocus is published by:

Foundation Fighting Blindness, Inc.
11435 Cronhill Drive
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117-2220

www.FightBlindness.org

© Foundation Fighting Blindness 2010

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MADISON, WI
PERMIT NO. 2223



Honoring our Visionaries: Visionary Awards Dinners Provide Recognition and Raise Funds

FROM THE hills of San Francisco, to the plains of Texas, to Baltimore’s Ravens stadium, the Foundation Fighting Blindness holds dinners across the country to present business and community leaders, renowned medical professionals, and generous philanthropists with the Foundation’s Visionary Award. This year, 29 deserving individuals are being honored in 13 communities. With four dinners yet to take place, more than \$2.7 million has been raised for sight-saving research so far this year. The Foundation is pleased to recognize all of this year’s Visionary Award recipients for their leadership within their communities and commitment to our mission.

Baltimore Visionary Awards Dinner
September 29, 2009
Honoring Arthur & Patricia Modell
and Bruce & Bonnie Sawyer

Northern Virginia Dining in the Dark
December 1, 2009
Honoring Mark Johnson and
the Honorable William Sessions

New York Dining in the Dark
January 28, 2010
Honoring Rando Allikmets, Ph.D.,
and Reuven Spiegel

Washington, DC For the Love of Sight Dinner
February 11, 2010*
Honoring John Willard “Bill” Marriott, Jr.

Tampa Bay Dining in the Dark
March 9, 2010
Honoring James P. Gills, M.D.,
and Stephen K. Klasko, M.D., M.B.A.

Orange County Dining in the Dark
March 25, 2010
Honoring Gavin S. Herbert
and Roger F. Steinert, M.D.

Dallas Dining in the Dark
April 8, 2010
Honoring Millie & Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D.,
M.P.H., and Margo & Jim Keyes

Richmond Dining in the Dark
April 29, 2010
Honoring Byron Ladd, M.D.,
and Paul & Diane Manning

St. Louis Dining in the Dark
May 5, 2010
Honoring Michael Kass, M.D.,
and John Mozeliak

San Francisco Dining in the Dark
May 11, 2010
Honoring Hal Barron, M.D.,
and Stephen McLeod, M.D.

Los Angeles Dining in the Dark
May 18, 2010
Honoring Bartly J. Mondino, M.D.,
and Bradley R. Straatsma, M.D., J.D.

Philadelphia Dining in the Dark
June 3, 2010
Honoring Stuart Fine, M.D.,
and Alan Laties, M.D.

San Diego Dining in the Dark
June 10, 2010
Honoring Michael House

**The For the Love of Sight Dinner was cancelled in February due to weather conditions. A make-up luncheon was held on April 27, 2010.*