

# IRIS Reading Program Serves Visually Challenged

## IRIS' Manager of Audience Development Describes How the Service Operates



Leah Voors

After working in development at WFYI Public Broadcasting, Leah Voors enthusiastically stepped up when the new position of Manager of Audience Development was established at the 25-year old IRIS (Indiana Reading and Information Services). That enthusiasm not only helped her land this new post, but it also energized her goal of serving the entire state of Indiana. According to Leah, "There are at least 30,000 people who can benefit from IRIS in Indiana and we currently reach only 1,800 of them."

### What Benefits Does IRIS Provide?

- IRIS "empowers" individuals who are reading impaired by allowing these citizens to stay connected to their world.
- IRIS enables listeners to remain active and informed citizens by hearing local and national news stories as well as practical information that impacts their daily lives (imagine not being able to read grocery store advertisements each week!)
- IRIS allows those who are reading impaired

to overcome that obstacle by making it possible for them to continue to "read" through the eyes and voice of another individual who is a member of their local community

### One Man's Story

One of the people IRIS has helped is a man from the Gary-Hammond region who was born blind in his right eye. Employed as a math teacher for many years, he began losing sight in his left eye about 5 years ago. As it worsened, he was unable to continue to work and he eventually lost one of his favorite hobbies: reading.

**"It's a blessing from God; it means so much to me and others like me, each and every day."**

An active man, he had always been well-informed about local politics and volunteered in his community. He discovered IRIS and it restored his links to the world: he "reads" the weekly Indianapolis Business Journal, the daily Indianapolis Star and the daily Gary newspapers,

and tunes in to the Bloomington station for updates on local sports. When asked to describe the impact that IRIS has had, he explained, "It is a blessing from God; it means so much to me and others like me, each and every day."

### What You Can Do to Help IRIS Reach a Greater Number of Reading-Impaired Hoosiers

- Sign up to become an IRIS volunteer reader – the service affords its volunteers flexibility in scheduling, such as weekly or monthly shifts, and even the convenience of recording readings from their home telephone
- Conduct follow-up calls to IRIS listeners to assess their benefits from the service and determine whether improvement modifications are needed
- Attend one of IRIS' upcoming Listener Lunches
- Take time to tell others about this remarkable FREE reading service for citizens who are reading impaired

For more information, please contact Leah at 317-614-0403 or visit wfyi.org and click on the IRIS icon located on the homepage.

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September 2008

## Dr. Price Performs Same Day Transplants on Father and Son

### History-making "Firsts" Surround Surgeries

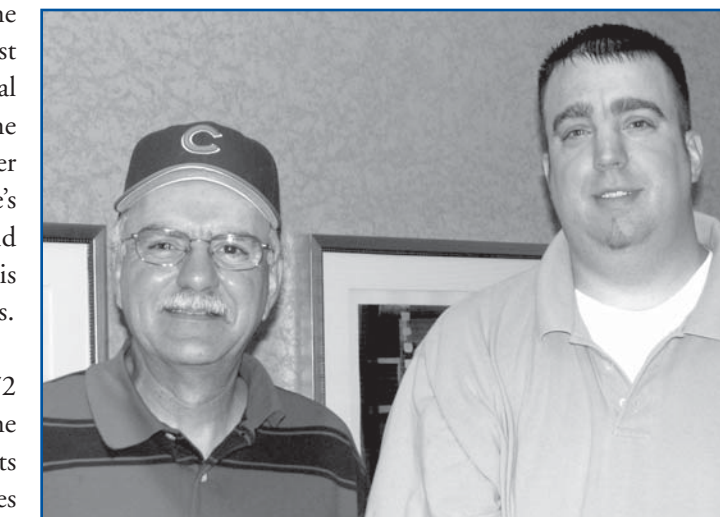
The Vietnam War was raging and young Michael ("Mike") Roberts had just gone through Air Force Boot Camp in 1966 with his sights set on becoming trained in geography and weather. Before being assigned to his next station, he was sent for an eye exam and a set of standard issue eyeglasses. The optometrist took one look and exclaimed, "Boy, how did you ever get in the Air Force?! You have keratoconus."

He was given a medical discharge and returned home to Galien, Michigan, where he found Dr. Eugene Benedict, an optometrist who had received corneal transplant for the same condition and would later play a key role in Mike's eventual transplants and in finding Dr. Francis Price, Jr. in Indianapolis.

From 1966-1972 Mike tried most of the usual interim treatments for his vision challenges including glasses, hard contacts, and a pair of custom-made contact lenses. Eventually he had traditional cornea transplants in both eyes, restoring his sight, which remained stable for many years. Then, in December 2007, Dr. Price confirmed that it was time for a re-graft since one of his original grafts had begun to fail. He performed the surgery using a laser to create interlocking incisions for the donor cornea and Mike's cornea to

provide a more precise fit. Additionally, anti-rejection medicine that Mike had used over the years had caused the development of an early cataract which would limit his vision until it was removed. But first things first: Dr. Price would perform the transplant and then later perform cataract surgery.

At the same time, Mike's 29-year old son Timothy (known as "TJ") had also been diagnosed with advanced keratoconus; glasses and contacts no longer worked and he was in need of a transplant, too. A very



Father & Son: Michael Roberts and Timothy Roberts

active athlete, TJ had lost numerous sets of contacts over the years and welcomed the opportunity to schedule transplant surgery with Dr. Price. A fortuitous cancellation opened up on the same day that his father's surgery was scheduled. He and his parents agreed it would be easier on the family if they both had surgery on the same day.

### Happy Endings are Anticipated

Both Mike and TJ are doing well; TJ's sight immediately improved after surgery while Mike's full improvement will have to wait for about a year before he has the stitches out and can have cataract surgery.

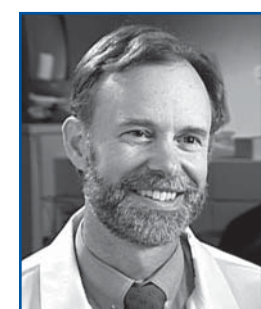
A remarkable number of milestones occurred on their shared surgery date:

1. Mike is the first patient for whom Dr. Price used a laser to perform the re-graft, creating interlocking incisions for the donor cornea and his cornea.
2. TJ is the first patient to receive a laser-assisted graft that replaced the front part of his cornea, leaving the back cell layer intact. A complicated surgical procedure, this graft should last even longer than his father's and will reduce his risk of rejecting the graft. TJ won't have to take as much anti-rejection medication as his dad did so he most likely will not develop early cataracts.
3. Mike and TJ are the first father and son, in 27 years of practice, to be transplanted by Dr. Price on the same day and for the same condition.

Footnote: While Mike and TJ's keratoconus had progressed too far to participate in the cross-linking study (see March issue of Visionary) which offers riboflavin treatment to stop keratoconus in its tracks, it is available to patients who meet certain criteria. For more information about how to participate in the study and about the treatment, contact Dr. Kathy Kelley at 317-814-2859.

## Ask Your Doctor

### By Dr. Francis Price, Jr.



**Q.** I have been diagnosed with cornea lattice dystrophy. My mom has had it, too, and has had multiple transplants. Every once in a while, without warning, I get a very sore eye that seems like a bad scratch on my eye and it's very painful. Can you tell me more about this condition and what to expect as I get older?

**A.** Lattice dystrophy, like a number of other corneal stromal dystrophies, often starts with recurring corneal erosions that happen when the skin covering on the surface of the eye pulls off causing an abrasion, or raw spot, on the surface of the eye. It feels just like the eye has been scratched. Typically these erosions happen on first opening the eyes in the morning or in the middle of the night. In some cases the eyes feel scratchy during the day as if something is in them. Over time, abnormal deposits of material accumulate in the deeper layers of the cornea. In lattice dystrophy this material is in the form of a lattice of fine deposits in the cornea which cause the surface of the cornea to become irregular and rough and leads to decreased vision. Vision is further decreased as deposits become denser in the rest

of the cornea and the cornea loses its clarity. Gradually it reaches a point where a corneal transplant is needed.

Traditionally, a full thickness corneal transplant has been done for corneal dystrophies like lattice dystrophy. More recently, anterior lamellar, or partial thickness transplants, have been done and offer these advantages:

- The eye is stronger after surgery and more resistant to traumatic wound rupture or injury
- There is minimal risk of immunological rejection of the new cornea with a lamellar graft compared to a full thickness graft.
- Because dystrophies always seem to recur in the transplanted corneas, eventually the graft will need to be replaced and an anterior lamellar graft is much easier to replace than a standard full thickness graft. (By easier I mean there is less damage to the host eye and less risk of immune rejection of the new graft.)

The benefits of anterior lamellar grafts can be tremendous considering that many people with corneal lattice dystrophy will require multiple grafts of each eye over a life time.

## Invitation to Send Us Your E-Mail Address

### Be the First to Get Our News in Real Time

Newsletters are important and we are proud of ours, but the news in it can't help but be a little bit "stale." On the other hand, e-mail allows you to get news in real time – you can receive press releases the same day we send them to media outlets, be the first to learn about new studies that are beginning, and read Foundation announcements on the day they are made. And, with one click, you can opt-out if you decide you no longer want to receive them. We will not share your email address with any other company or use it for any other purpose.

To increase the speed of our communications we invite you to send your e-mail address to Development Director, Elaine Voci at elainevoci@cornea.org

Questions? Call Elaine at 317-814-2996 to learn more.



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National Philanthropy Day is November 15th

*"It is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it."*

Albert Einstein

Events to reflect on the profound importance of philanthropy in our society will be held in numerous communities across North America in November. In Indianapolis the events include an awards dinner hosted by the Indianapolis chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals at the downtown Marriot Hotel. Tickets are priced at \$60 per person, \$480 a table. For more information, contact Sara Nash, at (317) 824-0940.

Annual Golf Outing Is Successful Fundraising Event

Golf Classic held under blue skies and agreeable temperatures



Over 100 golfers enjoyed the Wood Wind Golf course in Westfield, IN. Harry Scheid, Golf Chairman, was honored for his contributions by Dr. Francis Price, Jr. who presented him with a photo with engraved poem. Harry, in turn, thanked members of the Committee: Co-chair Walter Gross, Jr., Joe Kack, Pat Chastain, Mike Dickerson, Clorissa Quillin, Marianne Price, Sara Dugdale, Mark Horton, Trischa Zorn Hudson, Mark Russell and Elaine Voci. Thanks to everyone who played golf with us, donated in-kind services or sponsored the event. Over \$30,000 was raised to support our life-changing work.

College Intern In Second Year of Service to Our Mission

Ball State Education Major Aims for Career in Teaching

Lawrence ("Larry") Ruiz came to work at Price Vision Group in May 2007 because it offered him a two-year internship that was, as he put it, "A chance to learn real life business practices from nice people like Practice Manager Tony Sterrett and Wendy Mickler, Education Coordinator of the Medical Education programs."

Larry's values have been shaped by his family. He explains, "The most important thing I learned from my family is the importance of working hard in life and remembering that change is inevitable. Things happen in life that I can't control, but I know if I work hard and take nothing for granted, I can succeed."

Now in his second year, Larry is a Ball State student majoring in business education who anticipates graduating in May of 2010 and entering the field of teaching at the middle school or high school level. He maintains a 3.97 grade point average and was selected by his professors and the university to serve as a business and math tutor for fellow students.



One of the things Larry enjoys about his internship is being able to see how his contributions fit within the business model of excellent customer service and high quality patient care. As he puts it, "My part may be small but I can see how my contributions fit into the Bigger Picture and that is very satisfying."

How We're Having an Impact With Your Support

By Marianne Price, Ph.D.



The cornea is only as thick as a credit card, but it needs to be sliced even thinner for DSEK small incision transplants. A piece of equipment known as a microkeratome can make it easier to make these thin slices, but it's very expensive - about \$30,000. So in 2005, 2 eye banks each bought a microkeratome and offered to slice the donor corneas for surgeons.

Some people worried about trusting the cuts to eye bank technicians. So, one of the eye banks asked us if we would do a study to evaluate whether their "pre-cut" tissue was just as good as slicing the tissue in the operating room. This eye bank developed excellent quality control procedures and their technicians even came to the Foundation to be trained. We found that the eye bank pre-cut grafts appeared to be just as healthy and gave our patients just as good vision as tissue cut at the time of surgery. We have shared these findings with other eye surgeons at

national meetings and recently published the results in a leading eye journal.

The number of eye banks providing pre-cut grafts to surgeons around the world has grown now from 2 to over 12. Demand continues to increase as more and more surgeons learn the DSEK procedure. We appreciate the support of our staff and the many donors who allow us to continually improve the DSEK technique and make it more available to patients with disabling vision problems.

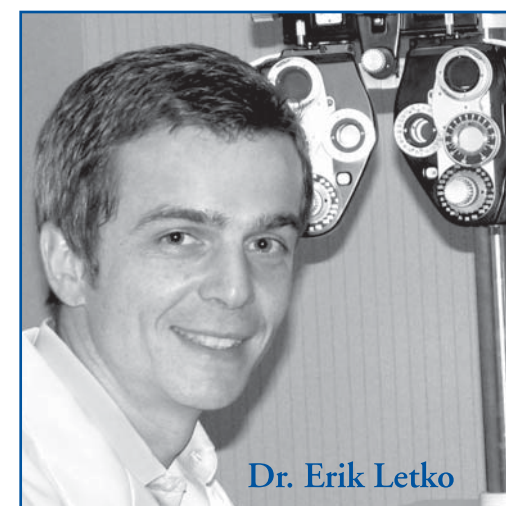
New Associate Joins Dr. Francis Price Specialist in Immunology and Corneal Conditions

Dr. Erik Letko grew up in Czechoslovakia, a culture in which the sense of community is exemplified by close-knit towns that serve as extended family for residents. He spent his first four years being raised by his maternal grandparents while his parents completed their studies at university. (His mother is a medical doctor, a pulmonary and allergy specialist.) From an early age, Dr. Letko learned to respect and rely on his inner wisdom and this has served him well as a decision-making tool.

Growing up in a small town allowed Dr. Letko to have frequent interactions with many of his parent's colleagues and he especially admired one of them, an older doctor, for the kind and thoughtful way he treated patients. It made a lasting impression and by the time he was ten years old, Dr. Letko had decided to become a doctor.

Medical school in Czechoslovakia consists of six years of training, not four as in the States. Dr. Letko went through rotations of different medical specialties, and he made two important discoveries that would prove pivotal to his future: he learned that he loved performing surgery and he met an ophthalmologist, Dr. Martin Filipec, who quickly became his mentor and, then later, his close friend.

It was Martin who encouraged Dr. Letko to apply for a fellowship at the world famous Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary in Boston to study with renowned immunologist and corneal specialist, Dr. Stephen Foster. At the end of his second year, Dr. Letko was invited to conduct research with Dr. Foster. He spent a total of six years in Boston in this role, and wrote numerous papers related to their studies.



In the meantime, mutual friends introduced Dr. Letko to his future wife, Heidi, who lived in Boston and worked as a librarian at Harvard University, while she completed training as a psychotherapist. He and Heidi married and moved to Portland, Oregon where he completed an internship

at the Casey Eye Institute so that he could qualify for both a full U.S. medical license and board certification. They had two small children and, while they enjoyed Portland's healthy lifestyle, both agreed that they wanted to raise their family in the best possible environment. As he weighed job offers on the East coast, he read about a fellowship being offered by Dr. Price and, following his "gut instincts", decided to apply.

The subsequent personal interview with Dr. Price and his wife, Marianne, went "great" as he described it, "It was very comfortable, as if I had found someone who shared a similar philosophy of life, as well as a love of research and of corneal surgery." When offered the opportunity to join the practice, he made an intuitively wise choice and said "yes".

Dr. Letko reports, "It is exciting to be in a busy practice and to conduct research with highly respected people like Drs. Price. The whole team is fantastic - people like Tony and Wendy, for example, are very friendly as well as professional." Dr. Letko and his wife look forward to raising their children in the Midwest known for its emphasis on family values. Welcome on Board, Dr. Letko! Our instincts tell us that you will be a wonderful fit and will help us stay at the forefront of new developments in Ophthalmology!

Words From The Heart

Dear Frank & Marianne,  
It was three years ago that we brought our son, Emmett, to you for PRK surgery to correct his vision - in order that he might be eligible for NAVY flight school. The surgery was successful and a year later, at the end of his senior year at Notre Dame, Emmett was admitted to flight school. Two years later, on 30 May 2008, his life long dream of flying became a reality when we pinned on his US NAVY "Wings of Gold".

Thanks for your part in making this possible,  
Timothy R. Kearney



Dear Dr. Price,  
Just a brief note to tell you and your staff how much Linda and I appreciate the wonderful work you all do for people with sight problems. Four years ago, our eye care professional in Plainfield told us about your work with Fuchs' Dystrophy patients. During that time, Linda used a 5x magnifying glass to read the newspaper. Her eyes were getting worse and she was depressed with the prospects of losing her sight completely. Then a wonderful event took place: she had two cornea replacements at your clinic! Now she can see to read anything she wishes.

You and your team have made our lives so much better, it is hard to describe. Keep up the good work! We are blessed to have you as our doctor.

Sincerely,  
Dick and Linda Hutchinson

Dear Frank,  
I wanted to share with you a bit of the quality vision that your creativity, passion and focus have provided my patients. Today is June 10, 2008, and my schedules are full of many patients with a vast array of histories, not unlike yours. However, three of my patients are status-post bilateral DSEK and you can see the results:

1. Linda, 67 year old: 20/30 right eye and 20/20 left eye.
2. Neil, 68 year old: 20/30 right eye and 20/30 left eye.
3. Richard, 72 year old: 20/30 right eye and 20/30 left eye.

After 25 years of clinical practice in Cornea and External Disease, I find that the paradigm shift that DSEK represents is the best new thing I have been able to offer my patients in my entire career. Thank you.  
Sincerely,

Thomas A. Gillette, M.D., FACS  
Eye Associates Northwest, PC

Dear Dr. Price and Marianne,  
I just read the Visionary that I got in the mail today. How exciting! You are both doing such neat things. It's so good that you can travel and do so many things together - enjoy all these moments and I know you do.

Your awards and recognition are all well deserved. I'm always proud to say, "I was one of Dr. Price's first patients. He and his family even visited us in our home." Just think how far you have come since then....!

With love and appreciation,  
Patty Cox