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SightLife and Northeast Pennsylvania Lions Eye Bank Combine to Eliminate Corneal Blindness

Combination expands SightLife's ability to serve surgeons and patients nationally and in underserved areas

--Accelerates progress toward eliminating treatable corneal blindness--

Seattle, WA and Bethlehem, PA – (February 8, 2016) – SightLife, the international eye bank that provides the most corneal tissue for transplant in the world, has joined forces with the Northeast Pennsylvania Lions Eye Bank (NEPLEB). Lions members voted in favor of combining the two non-profit organizations on August 19 after NEPLEB's Board of Directors unanimously voted to pursue the combination of the two in July.

After the transaction is completed, NEPLEB will transition its name to SightLife. The combination allows NEPLEB to further expand its distribution to not only United States ophthalmic surgeons, but also surgeons internationally, joining SightLife's mission to eliminate corneal blindness around the world, especially in underserved, developing countries. NEPLEB's customers will have access to expanded services from SightLife, which, together with its partners, restored sight to nearly 24,600 people around the world in 2015.

"SightLife and NEPLEB are highly aligned in both their mission and professional standards," said Monty Montoya, CEO of SightLife. "SightLife was founded in 1969 by the Northwest Lions in Washington State and we still enjoy strong involvement by Lions in all of the markets in which we operate."

Michael Bearden, SightLife's Director of Business Integration, will then oversee day-to-day operations of the Eye Bank. Former Acting CEO, Dr. Harry "Buck" Buchanan, will resume his more than 25-year role as Medical Director of the Eye Bank, along with Co-Medical Directors Dr. David DeRose and Dr. Alan Leahey.

In discussing the inspiration behind joining organizations, Dr. Buchanan explained, "We're at a paradigm shift in the eye banking industry and we needed to find an organization with which to join forces that has the abilities that we lack for international growth. After getting to know SightLife over the last several years, the organization emerged as the obvious top choice for us, made even more apparent after visiting their very impressive operations. Further since surgeons have the option of selecting tissue from available outlets nationwide, we believe becoming part of a much larger organization benefits everyone, creating a stronger network spanning both coasts."

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NEPLEB's eye banking program will continue serving donor families, corneal transplant surgeons, and the corneal blind from its 15,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. In 2015, the Eye Bank distributed 1,630 corneas for transplant.

This combination also enables NEPLEB's 59-year legacy serving Pennsylvanians to continue through the creation of a separate, well-funded charitable foundation that will support projects for the benefit of persons and communities in the nine Lions' Districts of Northeast and Central Pennsylvania that have supported the Eye Bank through the years.

About SightLife

Founded in 1969, SightLife is the largest and most experienced provider of corneas for transplant in the world, and is the only non-profit Global Health Organization and Eye Bank solely focused on eliminating corneal blindness worldwide.

SightLife and its global partners provided nearly 24,600 corneas for transplant in 33 countries in 2015. Ocular Systems, Inc. (OSI), which developed and manufactures the EndoSerter and EndoSaver surgical devices, became part of SightLife in 2014. For more information, visit www.sightlife.org.

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