



**Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation  
MD5M Council of Governors Meeting Report  
October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**MLVF Directors:**

The MLVF Board of Directors met for our quarterly board meeting on October 11, 2025.

**Thanksgiving for Vision (TGFV):**

We are getting ready for our annual TGFV 2025. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn St. Cloud, MN. The date will be November 1, 2025. Thanksgiving for Vision (TGFV) is an event free of charge for attendees and put on by the Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation. Begun in 1987, this annual event is a way for Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation to thank Lions Clubs and individuals and recognize all the Helen Keller Recipients from previous fiscal year and contributions that Lions have made to advances in eye care and Ophthalmology research. It celebrates the vision of partnership between Minnesota Lions club members and the University of Minnesota. This partnership has yielded the Lions Gift of Sight Eye Bank, the Lions Children's Eye Clinic, the Lions Macular Degeneration Center, the Lions Research Building, the Lions Eye Surgery Center, and more. MLVF will be providing this at no cost to the attendees. We are also looking for silent auction items for the event. In the past, we have asked for a basket from each district and any clubs or individuals that wish to donate. We will have the ability to take credit cards and Venmo this year too.

**State Fair Booth:**

Every year we staff an informational booth at the Minnesota State Fair with the Minnesota Lions Hearing and Diabetes Foundation. It is a great way to talk about all the Lions do for all our communities.

**Fundraising**

Our matching Grant # 4, OCT SPECTRALIS Retina Imaging Machine for \$112747 was approved by the LCIF Board of Trustees at its August 2025 meeting. An OCT is used for imaging of the retina and for management of Glaucoma. It is the third machine that will be used at the U of M Ophthalmology Department. The third machine will help patients' wait time. The next steps are for the OCT Spectralis Retina Imaging Machine to be purchased by Dr. Silvia Orengo-Nania and must be delivered, installed, tested and put in use. A nameplate needs to be installed with a nameplate saying, "paid for by LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION & Minnesota Lions Members". A picture must be taken to send to LCIF. Dave Moen, our project Chairperson, must attend a District Cabinet meeting to tell them the project is complete, answer any questions, and ask for a motion to have them approve the final report.

**Lions Gift of Sight**

1) LGS search committee has filled the newly formed position of Director, Partner and Public Relations and Communication Liaison. Amy Vallen started in September. In this role, she will support both the Lions Gift of Sight Eye Bank and the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Neurosciences. Amy brings more than 17



years of experience in nonprofit strategic communications, marketing, fundraising, public relations, advocacy, and social media and websites. She holds a BA in Communications and Art History from Macalester College and a Master's in Strategic Communication from the University of Minnesota. Most recently Amy was the Director of Communications at the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota and North Dakota, and she previously led integrated marketing and communications initiative at Make-A-Wish Minnesota, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, and in disability services. Amy lives in Falcon Heights with her two active boys and stubborn Shih Tzu. She is excited to join a great team and be a part of the University of Minnesota.

2) We continue to have a partnership with Lifesource, and we now have every hospital in Minnesota that did have an eye recovery contract with LifeSource. Our Revenue at LGS outpaced our predictions for 2024-2025 by over 12 percent. For the last two measurement years (2022 and 2023) LifeSource improved their Tier Rank from 3 to 2. The Measure Year is 2024 (released in April 2026) – LS does not anticipate a Tier change which is important as we do not anticipate having to accept a new OPO in Minnesota. LS is moving to the same enterprise software as LGS in May 2025. Later this month, if all goes according to plan, LifeSource will implement a push for referrals from their enterprise software to LGS'. This will save LGS time on every referral that comes to LGS from LifeSource. The steps involved in our current process (download, upload, data integrity check) will be eliminated. After they complete the transfer to their new platform, LGS and LS will approach hospitals, in partnership, to ask hospitals to transfer their eye contract to LGS so we will have better control of our own future. We look forward to starting this effort in early 2026.

3) Cornea Viewing/Storage Container: LGS is We have final designs and are ready for final prototypes to be made. We are in final negotiations with our design/production partner for transfer of intellectual property to LGS and for production commitments. We have notified appropriate parties that we intend to change our DMEK preload methods – UMN counsel has given the final green light to change.

#### **April is Donate Life Month**

Each year, donation organizations, partners and friends throughout the United States unite to help increase awareness about donation, and of the need for registered donors. In April, the collaborative national brand Donate Life highlighted celebrating eye, organ, and tissue donations. Lions Gift of Sight holds a special program during April featuring a flag raising ceremony at the UEL Lions flagpole, speakers and reception.

#### **Helen Keller**

It is the year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Helen Kellers Speech to the Lions to ask us to become the Knights of the Blind. A lot of clubs of MD5M have funds for Helen Keller awards and some clubs have several awards available. So, get the word out to the clubs in your districts to send in applications for Helen Keller Awards. The Award recipient receives a beautiful plaque and pin. An award recipient can receive up to four awards. We have had only 31 requests in the first quarter of 2025-2026 FY. Helen Keller Recognition Boards at the U of M – Nothing new has been done on the board since the July meeting. It was decided to wait until Dr Orengo has commitment on the new building before making a decision on the recognition board.



**U of M Department of OVNS:** Chair Dr. Silvia Orengo-Nania presented at our board a need for new space to replace the current outdated and inadequate facility at our July meeting. The Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation, the University of Minnesota Medical School, and the University of Minnesota Foundation are working together to bring the **University of Minnesota Lions Eye Institute** to life—a visionary initiative that will shape the future of eye care, research, and education for generations to come. The Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Neurosciences is pursuing plans for a new, state-of-the-art facility designed to expand access and deliver innovative, compassionate eye care for all Minnesotans. This partnership reflects a deep and enduring commitment to advancing vision science, clinical excellence, and training the next generation of ophthalmologists. The Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation, whose long-standing partnership with the University has transformed vision research and patient care across the state, is exploring a significant financial investment to help make this transformative project a reality. Their leadership and generosity continue to illuminate the path toward a future where every Minnesotan has access to world-class eye care.

**Dr. Joshua Hou, MD, Medical Director:**

- 1) **Kerify** is our trademarked software, developed in collaboration with ADCIS a software developer. LGS has signed up three eye banks to use this platform. The uptake of this technology has been slower than expected. We are making efforts to increase the adoption of this technology by:
  - a. Adding an additional subscription model (currently, only a per click model is offered) that will charge a flat fee per camera per month. Our partners, ADCIS, have seen this approach be more successful than the per click model in the other software offerings
  - b. We have begun approaching surgeons in addition to eye banks to increase adoption of this platform. We believe that surgeons, once exposed to the systems capabilities, will demand that their eye bank adopt the technology (began in September 2025).
  - c. We have wrapped up the DEKS-ACD sub study, which is a sub study of a large, NIH-funded, multicenter clinical trial that was looking at the impact of diabetes on donor cornea quality and post-transplant outcomes. In our sub study, we are testing our AI software to see how well it can predict and identify donor tissues that are likely to fail or do poorly after transplantation. Our sub study was conducted with collaborators from 5 other eye banks. Data from the NIH study is being unblinded and will be sent to us over the next month. Once all the data has been compiled, we will analyze it. We anticipate publishing 3 scientific papers from this sub study. A biostatistician from the Statistics Department at the University of Minnesota will help with data analysis. Assuming the Kerify software performs as we expect it to, this will help boost eye bank adoption of our software and establish it as an important tool in eye banking
- 2) **BrightMEM** We have two scientific manuscripts in press. One is a basic science paper which strengthens the pre-clinical data and rationale for transplanting Descemet's membrane on the ocular surface. The second is a clinical paper reviewing surgeon outcomes reports from the first cohort of cases with BrightMEM performed between 2022 and 2025. The clinical paper shows that BrightMEM promotes corneal healing in patients with ocular surface disease, reduces pain, and is overall safe as a procedure. We are also presenting two scientific presentations at the Cornea & Eye Banking Forum held at the American Academy of Ophthalmology. I will be presenting the clinical data from the clinical paper described above. Dr. Ching Yuan will be presenting on recent technological improvements on the BrightMEM, including a novel scaffold for holding the membrane like a contact lens and making it easier to culture cells on it, or transplant it on the eye.



We are looking into whether additional IP can be filed around these tech improvements through the University of Minnesota Office of Technology Commercialization. We are also discussing with Brightstar Therapeutics, further collaborations for improving BrightMEM with this technology. To date, there have been almost 400 BrightMEM transplants performed around the country. This demonstrates the impact of our research on saving sight. We are seeing increased surgeon adoption and now are seeing about 30 transplants done a month.

- 3) **Isochoric Supercooling** (Using specialized chambers to supercool donor corneas to subzero temperatures without ice formation to extend storage times by 3-fold). We continue to test and optimize our supercooling protocols to prolong the storage of donor corneas without needing to change the storage solution or anything other than the storage chamber. We recently submitted a grant to an external charitable foundation for \$75,000 to help fund our isochoric supercooling research. This same charitable foundation funded \$85,000 last year, which the MLVF matched with \$75,000 in funding from the revolving fund, for Dr. Sheheitli's glaucoma research project (which is ongoing). With those funds we were able to purchase a LiCor Odyssey Infrared Analyzer which has been a boon to my lab as well as other labs in the Department. We are also working with Dr. Tim Pruett from the Department of Transplant Medicine at the U and Dr. Matt Powell-Palm from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Texas A&M, to apply for a future Regenerative Medicine Minnesota (RMM) grant (up to \$400,000 over 2 years) and future NIH SBIR grant. This research has the potential to extend the storage time of donor corneas and also establish isochoric supercooling as a viable technique for prolonged storage of all solid organs, like lung, kidney, liver, and heart.

#### Upcoming events:

**November 1, 2025** - TGFV Holiday Inn St. Cloud

**December 6, 2025** - MLVF Director Only Meeting Zoom

**January 31, 2026** - MLVF Board Meeting Zoom

**March 12, 2026** – DGE Training and Dinner LGS and Roseville

**April 11, 2026** – April MLVF board meeting St Cloud

**April 12, 2026** – Donor Recognition St. Thomas University

**April 17, 2026** – Flag Raising for Donate Life Month LGS

**April 24-26, 2026** - MD5M Convention and MLVF Annual Meeting, Sheraton MPLS West, Minnetonka

**July 31, 2026** – MLVF Board Training LGS

**August 1, 2026** – MLVF Board Meeting LGS

#### Closing Remarks:

- The MLVF's Directors are available to all clubs, districts, and the great multiple of MD5M for informational visits whether it's virtual or in person.
- Please consider having one of our LGS/OVNS speakers come to your Midwinter Conventions.



MINNESOTA LIONS  
VISION FOUNDATION

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- Please let the Directors of your district know of any vision projects and vision-related fundraisers being done by the clubs and districts.
- Thank you for your continued support of the Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation. Without the support of the District Governors and all the great Lions of MD5M the Minnesota Lions Vision Foundation could not do all the great things we do to save and restore people's sight.

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