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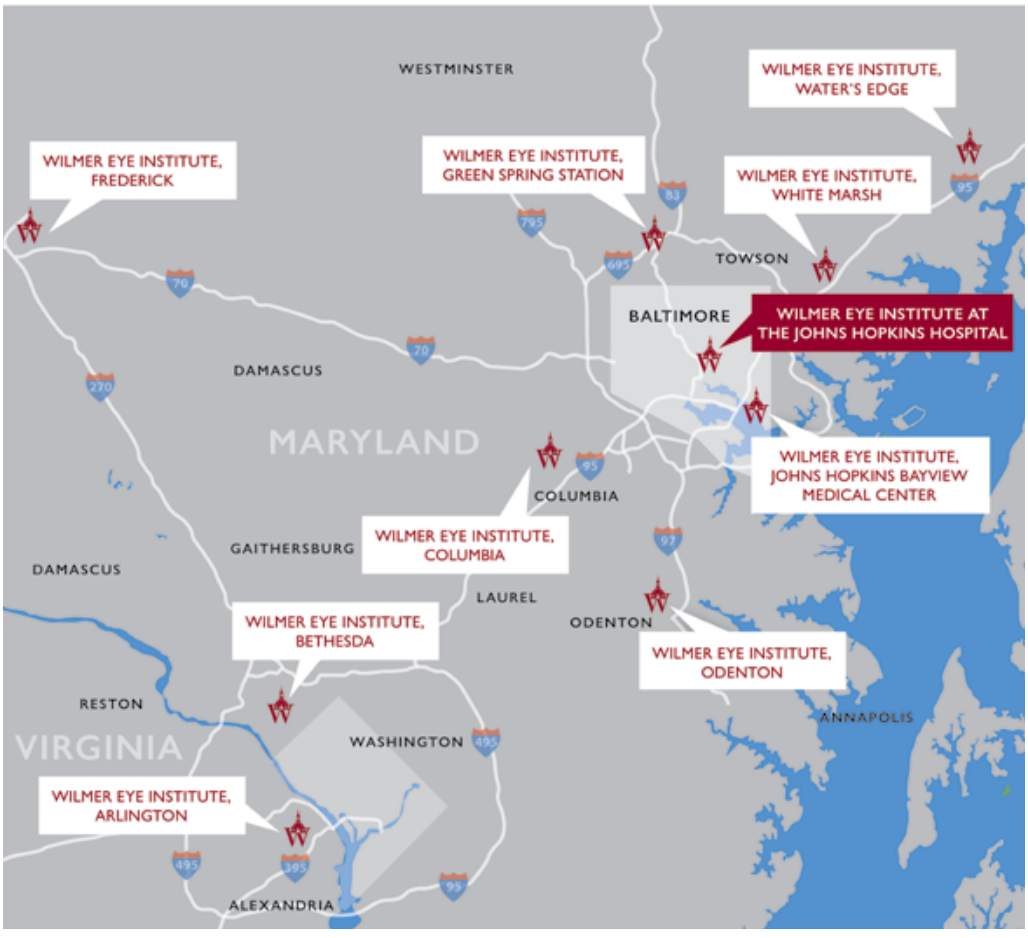
JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE



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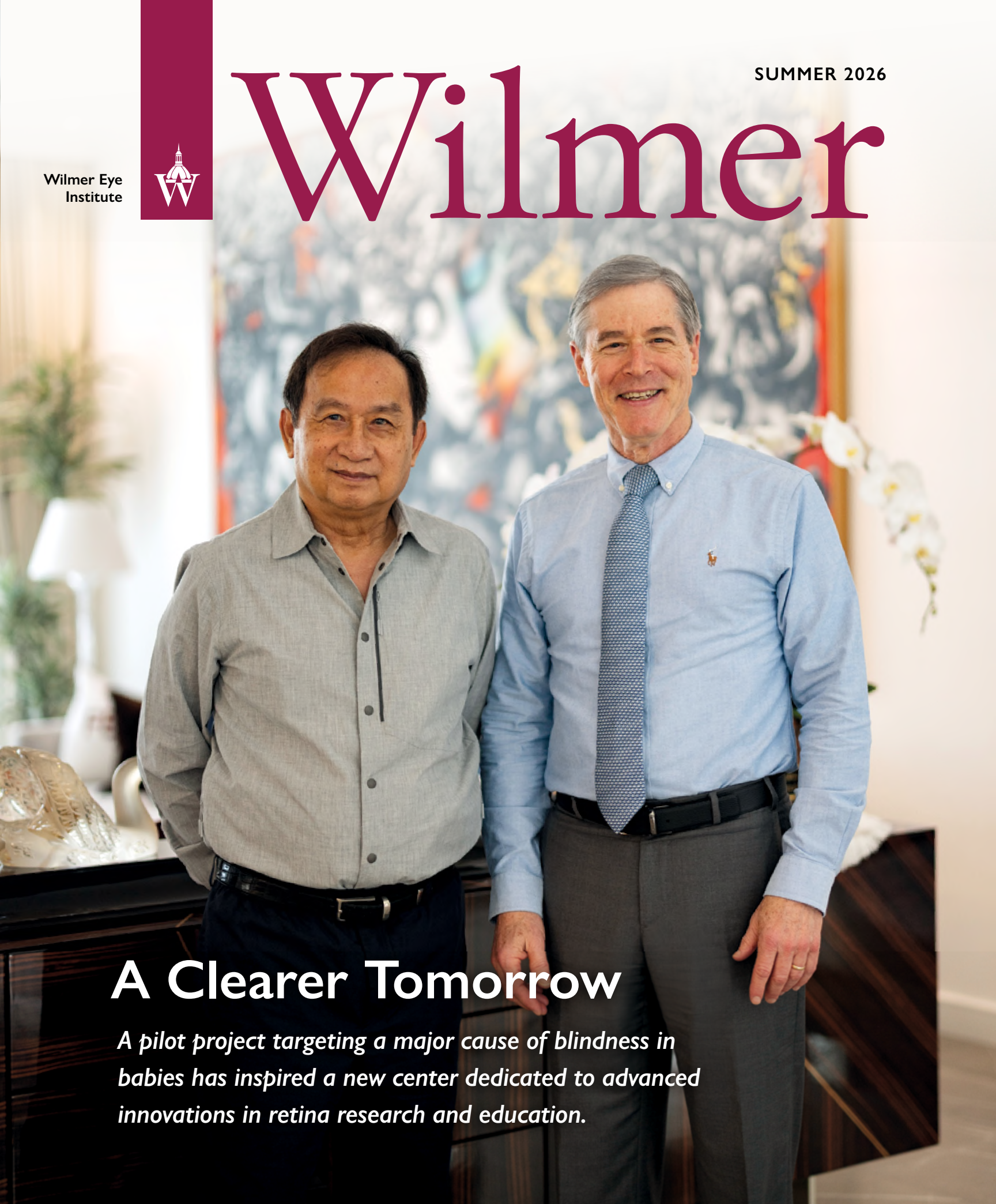
SUMMER 2026



A Clearer Tomorrow

A pilot project targeting a major cause of blindness in babies has inspired a new center dedicated to advanced innovations in retina research and education.

Looking Forward

Each year, some 50–60 medical students, along with doctors from the Wilmer Eye Institute, volunteer with Vision Screening in Our Neighborhoods (ViSION), a student-led free vision screening program founded in 2011 by **Thomas V. Johnson III, M.D., Ph.D.**, when he was a medical student. Today, Johnson is the Shelley and Allan Holt Rising Professor of Ophthalmology at Wilmer.

Now, with support from KeraLink International, the program is expanding. Partnering with Wilmer, KeraLink will provide specialized tools at community screenings to generate prescriptions for those who just need eyeglasses, allowing eyeglass orders to be placed then and there. The glasses will be shipped free of charge directly to patients, negating the need for them to make multiple visits to Wilmer for measurement, frame selection and pickup, which can be challenging for many in the under-resourced population.

As a result, ViSION doctor volunteers can devote more time to specialized cases, and the program will be able to expand its reach to neighborhoods farther away from Johns Hopkins since eyeglass recipients won't need to visit Wilmer.

Above:
Johns Hopkins University medical student and resident volunteers with the ViSION program.

Inside

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

On the cover: A collaboration between Thai businessman Chalerm Yoovidhya, physician-scientists at The Johns Hopkins University, Chiang Mai University, and Xinhua Hospital affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, was the impetus for a new global center dedicated to improving retinal care around the world. Yoovidhya is pictured at left with Neil Bressler, M.D., the James P. Gills Professor of Ophthalmology, who will lead the new center. See story on p.14.

AS I SEE IT...

Dear Friends,

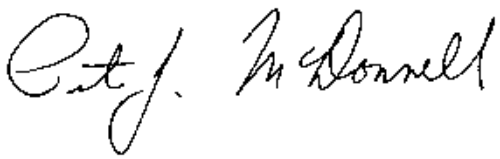
Two years ago, Wilmer researchers and their colleagues in Asia embarked on a study to assess the effectiveness of a model designed to train doctors in Thailand on how to obtain and interpret specialty images of infants' eyes. If it worked, the process had the potential to all but eliminate retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), a type of blindness that commonly occurs in preterm infants. The study was made possible by a prominent Thai businessman, Chalerm Yoovidhya, who had learned about the problem and wanted to make a difference.

As we report in this issue, while still ongoing, the study is already showing great promise and has begun to attract additional funding to apply the model to other under-resourced areas. Now, a substantial new gift from the original donor will be used to create a center at Johns Hopkins dedicated to establishing permanent, scalable research and education systems aimed at improving retinal care around the world (p.14).

We at Wilmer are beyond thrilled at the potential such a center offers to improve outcomes and lives. As Ted DeWeese, dean of the medical faculty and CEO of Johns Hopkins Medicine, said, this new center represents a powerful promise of renewal, clarity and optimism for sight, and will touch lives at every age and in every corner of the world.

This project exemplifies the kind of collaboration and dedication to research, teaching and patient care that we see at Wilmer every day, and serves as a reminder that by working together, we are truly making a difference.

Yours sincerely,



PETER J. McDONNELL, M.D.
Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute
William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology

NEWS

▲ **Thomas V. Johnson III, M.D., Ph.D.**, received a prestigious Research to Prevent Blindness Physician-Scientist Award. The award promotes the clinical, translational and basic science research of clinicians.

◀ **J. Fernando Arevalo, M.D., Ph.D.**, was honored with the Jules Gonin Medal, the oldest and most prestigious award in ophthalmology. Arevalo is the first Latin American winner of the award and joins, from Wilmer, **Alan Woods, A. Edward Maumenee** and **Al Sommer** as recipients of the honor.

◀ **Jamie Spangler, Ph.D.**, a biomedical engineer with joint appointments in Biomedical Engineering, Oncology and Ophthalmology, received the President's Frontier Award. The annual prize is given to a faculty member making transformative contributions to their field.

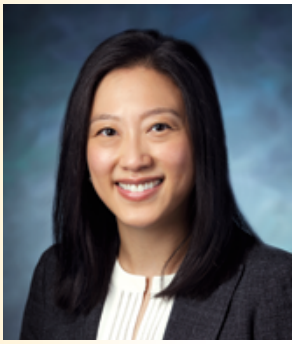
Lions Rally Celebrates Fundraising Goal ▶

The 2025 Lions Rally was held Nov. 22 in The Johns Hopkins Hospital's Chevy Chase Auditorium. Around 100 Lions from across Maryland and Delaware joined Wilmer faculty and staff for a morning of learning, including tours of the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center. During the rally, the Lions celebrated reaching their $1 million pledge to fund the Lions Vision Research Foundation Low Vision Research Fellowship, which Wilmer continues to raise money to support.

▲ PGY-3 resident **Whitney Stuard Sambhariya, M.D., Ph.D.**, was honored with a 2026 Resident Excellence Award from the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Foundation.

▲ **Gislin Dagnelie, Ph.D.**, was the 2026 recipient of the Oberdorfer Award in Low Vision Research. Supported by the Lighthouse Guild through the ARVO Foundation, the award honors Michael D. Oberdorfer, Ph.D., who served for many years at the National Eye Institute (NEI) as director of Strabismus, Amblyopia and Visual Processing.

▶ **Cindy Cai, M.D.**, was awarded the Scholarly Concentrations Excellence in Mentoring Award for 2025, which recognizes faculty mentors who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to mentoring student research in the Scholarly Concentrations program.



FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Cindy Cai, M.D.
Associate Professor

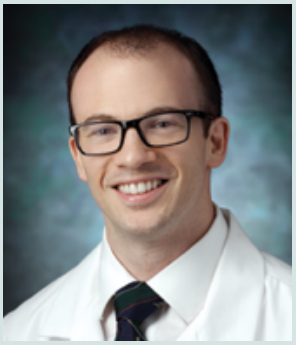
Xiangrong Kong, Ph.D.
Professor

Bradley Salus, O.D.
Assistant Professor

Jithin Yohannan, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Professor

▲ **Wilmer's Columbia** satellite location was voted "Best of Howard 2025" by *The Baltimore Sun*, marking the 12th consecutive year the clinic received this honor.

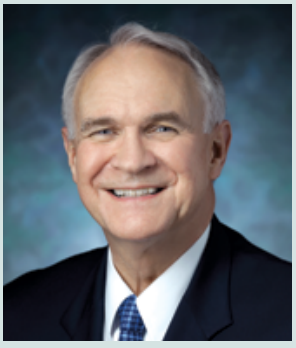
NEWS



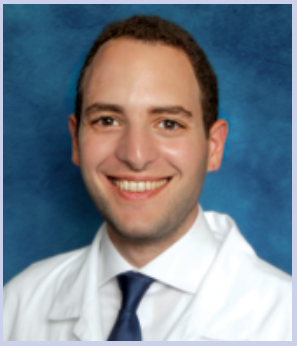
Drew Carey, M.D., was named clinic director of Wilmer's Frederick satellite location effective Feb. 1, 2026.

Yassine Daoud, M.D., was named clinic director of Wilmer's Columbia satellite location effective March 1, 2026.

Laura Ensign, Ph.D., assumed the role of director of Wilmer's Center for Nanomedicine.

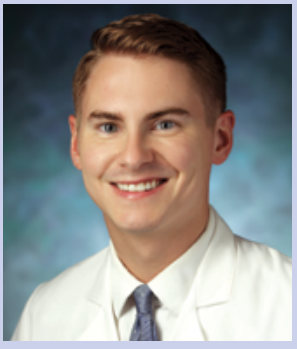


David Guyton, M.D., was the 2025 American Academy of Ophthalmology guest of honor in recognition of his significant contributions to ophthalmology and the academy.



PGY-4 resident **Omar Halawa, M.D.**, was a recipient of the Frank L. Coulson Jr. Award for Clinical Excellence.

Divya Srikumaran, M.D., was named one of *Baltimore* magazine's "Top Doctors" for 2025.



Bryce St. Clair, O.D., M.P.H., was named Maryland Optometrist of the Year for 2025 by the Maryland Optometric Association.

Rose Tan, M.D., Ph.D., a faculty research associate in the Kashani Lab, was named the 2026 recipient of the ARVO Foundation Research Catalyst Award.

A New Professorship Commemorates Outstanding Patient Care

By Jennifer Walker

On Nov. 5, 2025, **Ashley Behrens, M.D.**, chief of the Division of Comprehensive Eye Care at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine, was celebrated at a dedication ceremony as the inaugural recipient of the Edward St. John Professorship in Ophthalmology. This endowed professorship was made possible by St. John, founder and chairman of commercial real estate firm St. John Properties and a longtime patient of Behrens.

Left:
Lawrence Maykrantz, president & CEO chairman, Edward St. John Foundation; Lori Rice, executive vice president, CFO treasurer, Edward St. John Foundation; Sharon Akers, president, Edward St. John Foundation; Kellay St. John, vice president, Edward St. John Foundation; Jennifer and Edward St. John; Ashley Behrens with family members Jessica, Nicole, Nathalie, and Ash

"Professorships allow us to recruit and retain outstanding faculty like Ashley Behrens and perpetuate the excellence and preeminence that is Johns Hopkins," said **Theodore DeWeese, M.D.**, the Frances Watt Baker, M.D., and Lenox D. Baker Jr., M.D., Dean of the Medical Faculty and chief executive officer at Johns Hopkins Medicine, during the ceremony.

"Ashley and Ed represent a remarkable continuation of the partnership between philanthropic and clinical vision that has supported this institute and its faculty's impact since its founding — a legacy of focused impact that changes and improves patients' lives in perpetuity," said Johns Hopkins University President **Ronald J. Daniels, J.D., LL.M.**

St. John first connected with Behrens, who has served on the Wilmer faculty since 2003, after extensively researching cataract surgeons. At the time, St. John, who had LASIK surgery at Wilmer several years earlier, was suffering from deteriorating night vision due to cataracts. "When the lights of oncoming cars blinded me to the point I had to pull over, I sought out Wilmer again," he says.

Shortly after, in 2019, Behrens performed cataract surgery on both of St. John's eyes. The procedure was slightly more complicated due to St. John's previous LASIK surgery, which reshapes the curvature of the corneas to correct vision. As a result, Behrens had to calculate precise measurements of the size and shape of the altered corneas to determine the power of St. John's new artificial lenses, which are needed to replace the natural lenses removed during cataract surgery. The surgery was successful, leaving St. John with perfect 20/20 vision.

"The results were life-changing. I no longer rely on glasses and enjoy clear, trouble-free sight. I have the world's greatest doctor in Dr. Behrens," says St. John, who has supported Behrens' research since 2021. "Now, this endowed professorship will allow Dr. Behrens to spend more time focused on research so that others

can have the opportunity to experience the same care and outcomes to problems that affect our everyday lives, including possibly no longer needing glasses.

"To have my name associated with Johns Hopkins through this professorship is a privilege. I am especially proud that Dr. Behrens holds the title and am excited to see discoveries emerge under his leadership."

Behrens' research centers on refining an innovative antimicrobial therapy for corneal infections. These infections, known as keratitis, can be caused by bacterial, fungal, viral or parasitic sources and are currently treated with repeated applications of antibiotics over an extended period of time or, in the case of parasitic infections, antiseptic cleaners, all in eye drop form. The challenge is that patients need to administer the eye drops every hour or more around the clock. "Patients are basically linked to their bottles," Behrens says. "It's horrible because of the dedication they need to treat the disease, and that may be for days and even weeks."

The antimicrobial therapy, which Behrens has been working on for many years, would reduce this time commitment by treating these infections with ultraviolet light and vitamin B2 in a short clinical session, most likely followed by eye drops administered with less frequency and for a shorter period of time. "The novelty of this is that we could do a treatment that lasts 30 minutes in the clinic with relatively simple instrumentation and certain chemicals that we're developing to kill the microbial component," Behrens says. "In certain cases, we could repeat the treatment and cure the disease without requiring eye drops, which is a big improvement."

In 2009, Behrens published a study in the journal *Ophthalmology* about a version of this treatment, which was administered to three patients who had *Acanthamoeba keratitis*, a rare parasitic corneal infection contracted from an amoeba that can cause eye damage and blindness. These patients, who were unresponsive to other treatments, were successfully treated with the therapy, which involved a topical application of vitamin B2 as well as a 30-minute ultraviolet light treatment directed at the corneal ulcer that results from this infection.

Now, Behrens has restarted his corneal infection research, in part with the help of the professorship. "We've been trying to refine, to improve, and to make a more efficient treatment," says Behrens. "Mr. St. John is so generous to provide us with this professorship, which is going to enable me to find people to work in the lab and to cover part of the work that I need to do for research."

"Johns Hopkins is famous around the world for its researchers coming up with better treatments for diseases, and Dr. Behrens certainly qualifies, with about 100 papers that he's published in medical journals," adds **Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**, the Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute and the William Holland Wilmer Professor

Above: Ashley Behrens

of Ophthalmology. "Mr. St. John and his colleagues shared with me that the main motivation for creating this professorship for Dr. Behrens was to recognize his outstanding patient care and enable additional opportunities for research and discovery. To me, that's a wonderful compliment and recognition of a great doctor and a gifted surgeon, and I'm very proud that we have people at Wilmer like Dr. Behrens who combine scientific knowledge with clinical expertise." ●

"To have my name associated with Johns Hopkins through this professorship is a privilege. I am especially proud that Dr. Behrens holds the title and am excited to see discoveries emerge under his leadership."

— EDWARD ST. JOHN

A Boost for Ocular Immunology Research

By Abigail Green

Above:
George and Mary Nell Berry at the Wilmer Centennial Gala, June 2025

Ocular immunology is a subspecialty of ophthalmology that focuses on immune-mediated and inflammatory diseases of the eye, which result when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy eye tissue.

While such diseases are severe, they are treatable through immunosuppressive drugs that allow doctors to modulate the immune system. "It's very satisfying to see patients regain their vision," says ocular immunologist **Paulina Liberman, M.D.**, who joined the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine, faculty in 2024, after completing two fellowships at Wilmer. She previously directed the uveitis division at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile's Department of Ophthalmology.

At Wilmer, Liberman treats patients with complex systemic autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or sarcoidosis that can affect the eyes. She also sees patients with primary autoimmune diseases of the eye. Uveitis — the most common one — is inflammation of the uvea, the vascular layer of the eye in between the sclera and the retina.

Her research efforts to advance treatments for such diseases have received a significant boost thanks to the Berry Family Research Endowment, which will also provide support for Liberman and her colleagues to continue their work on rarer eye diseases that span multiple subspecialties.

The endowment was gifted by George Berry, a retired partner at Ernst & Young who led audit services for major multinational companies and continued to serve in advisory and consulting roles, and his wife, Mary Nell, who taught elementary school, including children with special needs. The Berrys support and serve on multiple advisory boards at Johns Hopkins Medicine.

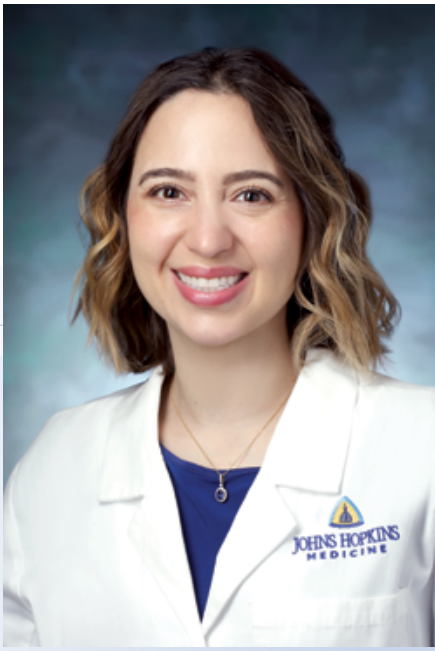
"The leaders and colleagues of the specialties we support, like Dr. Peter McDonnell and Dr. Liberman at Wilmer, are, in our view, the very best in their fields," say the Berrys. "It is our hope that endowments honoring these individuals will spur more innovations and discoveries in patient care for which Johns Hopkins Medicine is known throughout the world."

Liberman notes that one current area of collaboration at Wilmer is peripheral ulcerative keratitis, in which the immune system attacks the peripheral cornea, in severe cases leading to vision loss. At Wilmer, cornea specialists and uveitis specialists work together. "They take care of the surgical part, and we take care of modulating the immune system," explains Liberman, adding, "That conjunction of specialists is not something that's seen commonly."

Liberman next plans to focus her research on another potentially blinding disease, mucous membrane pemphigoid (MMP), a rare chronic autoimmune disease that can cause blistering and scarring of mucous membranes, including in the eye. Diagnosis is challenging, she notes, in part because while some patients appear to have MMP, biopsies of their affected eye tissue may result in a false negative.

Liberman's project will test whether AI can spot differences in eye images that doctors can't see, thereby aiding in more accurate diagnosis of MMP. "At Wilmer, we're trying to establish protocols for these diseases that are uncommon and challenging," she says. "The generous funding from the Berry Endowment will greatly aid us in our efforts."

"The Institute is grateful for this support from Mr. and Mrs. Berry," says **Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**, the Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute and the William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology. "Those of us who remember what it was like when we were young assistant professors just starting out and looking to test out our new ideas understand how much a gift like this can help launch our research projects and our careers." ●



Paulina Liberman

Partnering for the Best Possible Journeys

By Jennifer Walker

Since 1957, the Knights Templar Eye Foundation has supported the work of clinician-scientists at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine, through a thriving grant program, showing their deep commitment to improving vision through research, education and access to care. Founded in the tradition of medieval stonemason guilds, the Foundation — with about 60,000 members known as the Knights — recently began providing long-term support to pediatric glaucoma specialist **Courtney Kraus, M.D.**, who was named the Knights Templar Eye Foundation Professor of Ophthalmology last year.

Opposite page, from left to right: Sir Knight Bradley Andrukitis, right eminent grand commander of the Knights Templar for Maryland; Sir Knight Gary Kennedy, chairman, Knights Templar Eye Foundation for Maryland; Courtney Kraus, the Knights Templar Foundation Professor of Ophthalmology; Abhishek Vats, postdoctoral research associate; and Sir Knight John H. Austin, right eminent mid-Atlantic department commander, Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of USA

"We talk a lot in the industry, and most of the people knew Dr. Kraus' name and said that she's a great choice for a professorship that supports a pediatric ophthalmologist who is improving the quality of life for children who have eye diseases," says Robert Bigley, assistant secretary and office administrator of the Knights Templar Eye Foundation.

Kraus was drawn to pediatric ophthalmology because of the important role clinicians play in the growth and development of their young patients. This is particularly true for children with glaucoma, a chronic eye disease characterized by increased eye pressure, which potentially damages the optic nerve and causes permanent vision loss. "Pediatric glaucoma is a diagnosis that often takes families by surprise, and it's met with a lot of questions, uncertainty and fear," she says. "But I've always taken joy in the fact that we can partner with the family and the child and make it the best possible journey for them."

Kraus is conducting research on how children with glaucoma are impacted by this diagnosis in their daily lives. She is studying whether music helps patients have a more positive experience during their frequent visual field tests, as well as whether young people who are diagnosed during adolescence have a greater likelihood of being diagnosed with ADHD, which can impact their progress in school.

Kraus is also analyzing patient records to learn the rates at which this population is diagnosed with mental health conditions. "If you look at other childhood onset chronic diseases, we know these kids are much more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety and depression," she says. "But there's really no research on what's going on with our pediatric glaucoma patients. If a correlation exists, the hope is that we will be able to convert this knowledge into tangible changes in the way we care for kids with glaucoma."

This professorship, which also supports Kraus' work in training residents, is an extension of the support that the Knights Templar Eye Foundation has provided to faculty members at Wilmer for nearly seven decades. During that time, the organization has also awarded 96 early career or renewal grants to faculty whose work is advancing the field.

"I have the highest admiration for the Knights," says **Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**, the Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute and the William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology. "We're very grateful for this professorship they have funded. There's quite a shortage of specialists taking care of children with eye diseases, and this professorship helps address that by supporting Dr. Kraus, who is helping to train the next generation of pediatric ophthalmologists." ●

A Clearer Tomorrow: New Global Center Lights the Way to Reduce Vision Loss

A pilot project to reduce the magnitude of a major cause of blindness in babies in Thailand is the impetus for a new endowed center at the Wilmer Eye Institute dedicated to advanced innovations in retina research and education worldwide.

By Amy Entwisle

Each year, premature infants develop retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) which, if left untreated, often leads to blindness. In Thailand, where 1 out of 1,000 children are blind, fully two-thirds of these cases are due to ROP.

ROP is a condition in premature babies that affects the retina — the tissue responsible for sensing light and sending vision signals to the brain. In ROP, abnormal blood vessels and scar tissue can grow on the surface of the retina, which can bleed into the middle cavity of the eye, or cause the retina to detach, causing irreversible vision damage. Detecting the onset of ROP is crucial, as quick intervention often can prevent these complications and preserve vision.

While ROP can be treated if detected before substantial damage has occurred, management often depends on specialized retinal imaging devices for the retina, which do not exist in many places around the world.

"These treatments are effective only if you know which infants need treatment," says **Neil Bressler, M.D.**, the James P. Gills Professor of Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine. Bressler led a collaboration between physician-scientists at The Johns Hopkins University, Chiang Mai University in Thailand, and Xinhua Hospital affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine in China, to improve diagnosis and outcomes for at-risk babies.

Above:
Jun Kong,
Chalerm Yoovidhya,
Neil Bressler

"Saving the eyesight of even one baby is remarkable; having the opportunity to reduce the magnitude of blindness of so many children in Chiang Mai is beyond what I might have imagined. And it is especially gratifying to know that the program started in my home country of Thailand." — CHALERM YOOVIDHYA

Above:
Neil Bressler, second from right, discusses retina images being obtained in a premature infant by Thailand study leader Atchareeya Wiwatwongwana, M.D., right, while the baby is soothed by neonatal nurse specialist Kwanhathai Kantaroj, left center, as Jun Kong, far left, prepares communication with retina experts in Shanghai.

In 2024, with support from prominent Thai businessman Chalerm Yoovidhya, Bressler's team launched a study to determine if providers, given appropriate equipment and training, could create systems aimed at reducing childhood blindness from ROP.

To facilitate the study, the researchers purchased and installed state-of-the-art camera systems in Chiang Mai University's neonatal intensive care unit and trained Thai providers to obtain high-quality retina images, in coordination with ROP experts in Shanghai. Thai physicians shared anonymized retinal images of premature infants with Shanghai ROP experts, coordinated via Johns Hopkins.

Jun Kong, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of ophthalmology at Wilmer and co-investigator on the project, was instrumental in facilitating collaboration across Wilmer, Chiang Mai and Xinhua Hospital.

Bressler says the project, now in its second year, has been a resounding success. "We have been able to identify every single child, confidently, that needed treatment. Of the 120 eyes of 60 infants followed with over 6,000 images, 23 infants developed ROP; all were managed with careful observation, state-of-the-art treatment with laser to the retina, or anti-vascular endothelial growth factors. Only one eye required surgery," says Bressler.

"It is exciting to see the remarkable success of the initial study and to know that that these investments can really have an influence over the lifetime of these infants," says Yoovidhya.

Already, that work has inspired an anonymous donor to support Bressler and his team in replicating the model in the Borneo region of Malaysia, where a research team is determining which lessons learned within the Thailand project might apply, and how to adapt their approach to different local contexts.

Says Kong, "Programs such as these not only could reduce childhood blindness but also lay the groundwork for local site investigators to develop their own future research and educational opportunities based on their experiences participating in these research projects."

These projects also provide clinical research fellows with advanced training at Wilmer with the opportunity to transfer the experience and expertise acquired at Johns Hopkins to areas where they return for their careers.

For example, Wendy See, a retina specialist from Malaysia, worked as a clinical research fellow with Bressler and Kong and then returned to the Borneo region as one of its first retina specialists. Subsequently, when an anonymous donor approached Bressler to determine whether programs like the one in Thailand might be pursued elsewhere, such as in Malaysia, Bressler already had a connection there via See.

After learning about the early success of the project in Thailand and how it served as a catalyst to set up similar programs elsewhere, Yoovidhya has made a transformative new gift to the Wilmer Eye Institute to establish a center at Johns Hopkins dedicated to innovation, research and education to continue to pursue such projects worldwide.

"Programs such as these not only could reduce childhood blindness but also lay the groundwork for local site investigators to develop their own future research and educational opportunities based on their experiences participating in these research projects."

— JUN KONG

The Yoovidhya Global Advanced Innovation in Retinal Research and Education (AIRRE) Center at the Wilmer Eye Institute will build on previous work by Bressler, Kong and their international collaborators to establish permanent, scalable research and education systems aimed at improving retinal care around the world. Bressler serves as director of the center, and Kong as associate director.

The Global AIRRE Center's scientists plan to leverage innovative technologies, including artificial intelligence applications and advanced retinal imaging tools, working in conjunction with regional universities, industry, government and foundations, to identify projects that address retinal diseases that ideally have substantial public health impact on different regions of the world.

"It's tremendously satisfying to know that our work in Thailand is already encouraging others to give in order to save the sight of infants in other locations where these programs are needed around the world," says Yoovidhya. "Partnering with Johns Hopkins to create the Global AIRRE Center at the Wilmer Eye Institute ensures that these programs can continue to reduce the risk of vision loss from retinal diseases at all ages for decades to come." ●

Quiet, at Last

By Jon Bleiweis

Brain surgery was the last thing Kylie Myles expected when she visited urgent care and was diagnosed with pink eye in March 2023. Her left eye was red, painful and light sensitive, and her vision was blurry. When antibiotics didn't help, a co-worker urged her to get a second opinion at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine. Myles scheduled a same-day appointment with optometrist **Bryce St. Clair, O.D., M.P.H.**

St. Clair diagnosed Myles with uveitis — an inflammation of the eye's middle layer — and ordered an imaging test, which showed the optic nerve was swollen, suggesting a deeper issue. He sent Myles to the emergency department.

Further testing, including a spinal tap, revealed high pressure in the brain and swelling of the optic nerve head. Myles' cerebrospinal fluid pressure also was elevated. Imaging showed severe narrowing of the vein that helps drain blood from the brain — which can slow blood flow and raise pressure inside the skull and, in turn, at the optic disc. "Her brain was not able to drain fluid appropriately," St. Clair says.

He referred Myles to Wilmer uveitis specialist **Meghan Berkenstock, M.D.**, for follow-up. "When uveitis is recurrent or needs systemic therapy, we're fortunate at Johns Hopkins to have a dedicated uveitis clinic," St. Clair says. "Collaborating with specialists like Dr. Berkenstock ensures patients get subspecialty expertise when it's needed."

When Myles developed persistent headaches and tinnitus, Berkenstock referred her to Johns Hopkins neurologist **Abhay R. Moghekar, M.B.B.S.** Medication provided some relief, but caused significant side effects, including dehydration, fatigue and tingling sensations in Myles' hands and feet. To relieve symptoms, Moghekar recommended surgery to insert a stent in the venous sinus. "The thought of brain surgery was really scary, but I thought if I don't have to be on this medication, maybe it's worth it," Myles says.

In April 2024, Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon **Philippe Gailloud, M.D.**, placed two stents inside Myles' narrowed transverse venous sinus to widen it and improve drainage, which helped lower intracranial pressure. Immediately, the tinnitus stopped, and the pressure in Myles' head, neck and eyes eased. Before, everything had felt loud and oppressive. Now, it was finally quiet. "As scary as it was, I'd do it all over again if I had to," she says.

Today, Myles' vision is back to normal. Her uveitis flares have recurred two to three times per year but are milder and treated promptly. Their origin remains unclear (Berkenstock notes that the cause of about 50% of uveitis cases is unknown). Berkenstock continues to monitor Myles for systemic diseases that can be associated with uveitis, such as multiple sclerosis.

"I've never had care that is so insistent on not just fixing the symptoms, but really trying to understand the reasons behind it," Myles says.

"Wilmer's same-day appointment policy has been in place for years now," says **Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**, the Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute and the William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology. "We see more than 13,000 patients for same-day appointments each year. While rare, this is not the first time a patient seen the same day for an apparent 'eye problem' has been scheduled for surgery by one of our outstanding Johns Hopkins neurosurgeons because the underlying problem was lurking in the brain. This access has clearly resulted in instances where Wilmer doctors were able to prevent permanent vision loss." ●

Opposite page:
Meghan Berkenstock, Bryce St. Clair, Kylie Myles

Continuing the Iliff Legacy

By Abigail Green

Above:
Ashley Campbell, right, and fellow Chris Cho

The Iliff family has long been associated with oculoplastic surgery and excellence in patient care. Charles E. Iliff III graduated from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1939 and served on the faculty of the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine, for four decades. At the time of his death in 1997 at age 86, Iliff was a professor emeritus of ophthalmology at Wilmer. He was internationally renowned for his groundbreaking work in oculoplastics, cataract surgery and corneal transplantation that contributed greatly to the standards of modern ophthalmology. His two sons, Jack and Nicholas, both became oculoplastic surgeons, as well, and both also trained at Wilmer.

"The Iliff family has had an enormous impact on oculoplastic surgery," says **Ashley Campbell, M.D.**, an associate professor in the Division of Oculoplastics at Wilmer, who was named the newest recipient of the Charles E. Iliff III, M.D. Professorship in Ophthalmology in September 2025. The professorship was established in 2005 by an anonymous donor and grateful patient to honor Iliff's name and legacy. In addition, members of the Wilmer faculty have made commitments to this professorship.

Campbell is the second person to hold the Iliff professorship; the first was the late Iliff's son Nicholas T. Iliff, M.D., with whom Campbell had the privilege of working when she was in medical school.

"I experienced firsthand his surgical expertise and willingness to teach," Campbell says. "All the Iliffs were known for their exceptional bedside manner. I'm very honored to receive this professorship and to carry on the values the Iliffs embodied in taking care of their patients. I hope to continue that legacy in my own work here."

For 20 years, Nicholas Iliff cared for Sharon Kress, performing multiple eye surgeries following injuries she sustained in a serious car accident. "He's an amazing man," said Kress in a 2023 interview. "I live in New Jersey and if I couldn't get an appointment, he met me at Bayview on Saturdays," she

said, as just one example of how Iliff would go above and beyond for her.

Like Nicholas Iliff before her, Campbell devotes much of her time to direct patient care, both in the clinic and the operating room, treating a wide range of patients and pathologies. She collaborates on many combined cases with other subspecialists at Johns Hopkins, including neurosurgeons, rhinologists, otolaryngologists and facial plastic surgeons.

In the realm of research, Campbell's primary focus is on trying to determine the genetic drivers of sebaceous carcinoma, a rare but aggressive skin cancer that arises from the oil-producing glands in the skin and commonly develops on the eyelids. She is working to better understand how emerging immunotherapies could be used to treat the condition.

The Iliff professorship will help support that research. "My dream is to come up with a better, more targeted therapy for sebaceous carcinoma," she says.

"Generations of Wilmer residents (myself among them) who worked with 'the Iliff boys' know that Charlie, Nick and Jack were remarkably capable and caring physicians and gifted surgeons," says **Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**, the Alan and Marlene Norton Director of the Wilmer Eye Institute and the William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology. "They were role models for us young doctors and it is most fitting that the Iliff name and legacy will continue to be honored at Wilmer." ●

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Your donations directly impact the Wilmer Eye Institute's mission to transform medical outcomes in the field of ophthalmology through collaboration and innovation, resulting in compassionate, leading-edge, patient-informed care.

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A Bequest for Optometry

By Jennifer Walker

Above: Karen and Ken Lanno

"Optometrists are the front line: They make or break the whole relationship with patients. That's why we're trying to make a difference there."

— KEN LANNO

Last year, Karen Lanno noticed her vision was getting foggy — the first issue she'd experienced with her sight since having multifocal intraocular lenses implanted 15 years before. "I play a lot of golf, and I couldn't see where the ball was going," she says, adding that she also struggled to read road signs at night.

"It definitely changed her ability to get around and do her daily activities," says Ken Lanno, Karen's husband.

After Karen visited one doctor without finding relief, Ken suggested going to Johns Hopkins, where he had a successful bone marrow transplant several years prior. In April 2024, the Lannos met with **Laura Di Meglio, O.D.**, a comprehensive optometrist at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins Medicine, who collaborated across divisions and subspecialties throughout Karen's care.

Di Meglio performed a thorough eye exam to begin to identify the source of Karen's cloudy vision. When she examined Karen's right eye, Di Meglio found a film behind the lens implant that had developed after a previous cataract surgery and an epiretinal membrane — a layer of scar tissue — on her retina. After a prescription for new glasses didn't significantly improve Karen's vision, Di Meglio referred her to **Uri Soiberman, M.D.**, a cornea specialist, to be assessed for a laser procedure to remove the film on her lens implant, and **Cindy Cai, M.D.**, the Jonathan and Marcia Javitt Rising Professor of Ophthalmology, a retina specialist, for further evaluation of the epiretinal membrane.

Using a YAG laser, Soiberman created an opening in the cloudy lens so light could pass through to the retina. Cai confirmed Di Meglio's diagnosis of an epiretinal membrane, also known as a macular pucker, which can wrinkle the retina and cause vision impairment.

"The big question I had is whether or not the macular pucker was responsible for the decreased vision that Mrs. Lanno was experiencing," Cai says. "We don't want to do surgery unnecessarily and have patients not get an improvement in vision."

Since it was challenging to determine definitively if the epiretinal membrane was the issue, Cai sent Karen back to Di Meglio to first

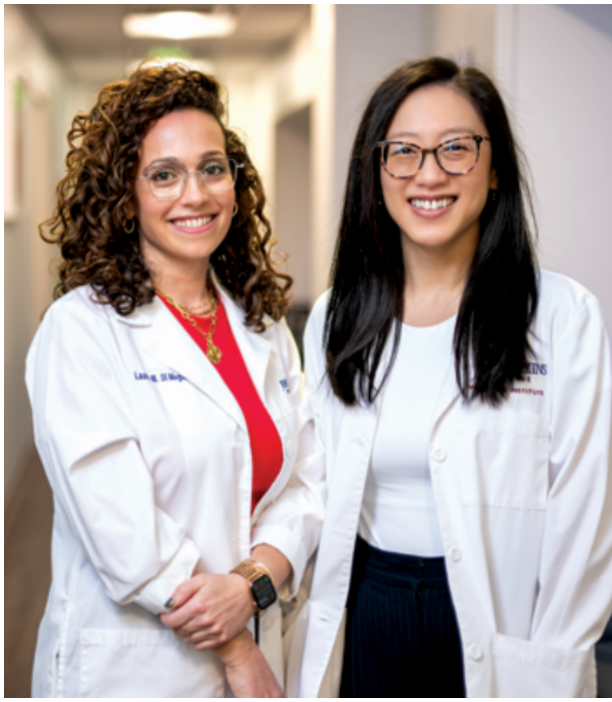
look for a nonsurgical solution. This time, because the film on Karen's lens had been addressed, Di Meglio found a prescription for glasses that proved effective, giving Karen 20/25 vision in her right eye.

"For somebody my age to have 20/25 vision, I'm very lucky," says Karen. "I'm going to keep following up with Dr. Di Meglio for the rest of my life."

The Lannos have chosen to support Wilmer through their estate with a bequest dedicated in part to optometry. "Optometrists are the front line: They make or break the whole relationship with patients. That's why we're trying to make a difference there," says Ken, who also supports the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Johns Hopkins Heart and Vascular Institute.

Di Meglio is thrilled that the Lannos, whose bequest will also support retina research, have chosen to support optometry. "Our role is not only to improve sight with glasses or contact lenses but also to evaluate the health of the eye, identify underlying causes and connect patients with the right care when needed," she says.

Di Meglio continues, "This gift is a meaningful contribution to optometry at Wilmer and one of the first of its kind. For optometrists in full-time clinical roles, finding the support to start research and academic projects can be challenging. In the long term, such support can lead to innovation and better outcomes for our patients." ●



Above: Laura Di Meglio and Cindy Cai

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In 1925, the nation's first university eye clinic to combine eye patient care, research and teaching was established, thanks to the generosity of friends and former patients of William Holland Wilmer. Your gift will ensure Dr. Wilmer's legacy continues through education, treatment and pioneering research. Consider these opportunities:

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Looking Back

It isn't often that an organization gets to celebrate its centennial anniversary. Throughout 2025, the Wilmer Eye Institute marked this very special occasion with parties, publications and — as part of the annual Wilmer Residents Association meeting — an alumni panel, all in honor of the institution's storied history of advancing science, education and patient care.

On June 14, we came together for a once-in-a-lifetime gala celebration of past accomplishments, with an eye to a future where no one goes blind from preventable causes.

Right: At the Wilmer Eye Institute centennial gala, young patient Bernie Cowell Murray stole hearts and the show on the eye chart-inspired dance floor.