



A stitch in time: Cataract surgery revives career

Holding an awl in one hand, and a man's leather shoe in the other Abraham, in Kenya, demonstrates how he pierces a hole in the leather before stitching it up to make a repair.

It's part of his job as a cobbler that, for months, he was unable to do.

A couple years ago, Abraham started having trouble with his vision. His work suffered as he had more and more difficulty focusing his eyes on the tiny stitches and delicate work of shoe repair. He began pricking himself repeatedly with the needles, and eventually, he couldn't get the needles threaded at all. Finally, he had to shutter his business.

At age 65, Abraham's six children are now grown up, but his income was essential to supporting his grandkids. Without being able to repair shoes, he had to rely on his wife's earnings as a farmer to get by.

And the loss of income wasn't the only financial difficulty exacerbated by his vision loss. Because he couldn't see well enough to punch in his PIN on his phone, Abraham started giving the number to shop attendants while making purchases. Eventually he realized that some of them were stealing from him and transferring additional money to themselves before handing the phone back over.

Abraham went to a nearby clinic for help with his vision. He received a prescription for eyedrops, but his condition continued to worsen despite regularly using the drops.

One day, Abraham met one of our community health volunteers, who was going house to house doing eye health screenings. The volunteer gave Abraham a referral to the eye unit at our partner facility, the Iten County Referral Hospital, where he was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes.

Read more inside →

Continued from cover

Just weeks later, Abraham went back to the Iten Eye Unit. The surgeries on both eyes were a success, and when our staff caught up with him, they were impressed with how quickly he had bounced back. He has started repairing shoes again and is happy to be taking care of his family with the income. He has also become an eye health ambassador, telling his neighbours about the Iten Eye Unit and how eye surgery transformed his life.

Thank you for your support, which helps us reach people like Abraham, who might otherwise have gone blind needlessly!



Made possible through the generosity of our donors, the Iten Eye Unit was established in 2023 in partnership between Operation Eyesight and the Elgeyo Marakwet County Government. Along with the eye unit, we've been running a community eye health program, which has screened more than 100,000 people to date.

2023 Annual Report now available

In 2023, we made an impact on the lives of more people, families and communities than ever before. In our *2023 Annual Report*, find stories about a girl who dreams of becoming a doctor, a mother who was inspired to become a community health care worker and communities that opened local vision centres. Find 60th anniversary reflections, read impact stories from around the world, and learn about the Global Strategy that will see us expand both locally and globally over the next five years.

Thank you for being part of our growing global community of members, donors, supporters and partners. Together, we are transforming lives
– *For All The World To See!*

Scan the QR code below to read the full report or visit: operationeyesight.com/annualreport





Sharda poses for a photo at the C. L. Gupta Vision Centre in Gajraula, where she often drops by to chat with nervous patients about her experience getting cataract surgery. The vision centre was established through a partnership with Operation Eyesight and Standard Chartered Bank's Seeing is Believing Program.

An eye health ambassador's long journey to restored sight

Imagine preparing a meal for family and friends, and nobody eats it because they don't trust your cooking skills due to your failing eyesight.

Or picture yourself shopping at the local marketplace and wondering if you're being shortchanged by the vendor because you can't see the numbers on the coins.

That's what Sharda, who lives in a village in Uttar Pradesh, India, experienced during her 35 years of near-blindness.

Until recently, Sharda had never seen her grandchildren's faces.

The grandmother started losing her eyesight after being bitten by a snake – an injury that affected both eyes. During a hospital visit, a health worker told her that they couldn't do anything to help her, even though Sharda was in a position to pay for eye health services. She travelled all the way to Punjab, where her sister lives, to see if she could get help there, but once again, she was turned away without treatment.

One day, Sharda met a community health volunteer who was going from house to house as part of our project with the C. L. Gupta Eye Institute (CLGEI) in nearby Moradabad. The volunteer assessed Sharda's eyes and gave her a referral to CLGEI, where she was diagnosed with cataracts and got an appointment for surgery.

After getting both cataracts removed, Sharda was amazed at the dramatic recovery of her vision. She could finally see her grandchildren clearly.

Today, Sharda is back to cooking and shopping, and once again feels loved and valued by her family. With a new lease on life, she tells everyone she knows about CLGEI's vision centre and how staff there helped her regain her sight. And she has her sights set on her next project: her husband. Sharda says she's taking him to the hospital soon to get his cataracts removed as well.

Thank you to our donors, partners and eye health ambassadors like Sharda for supporting our sightsaving mission!



Gwen poses for a photo in May 2020.



Gwen poses in front of the Taj Mahal during her trip to India in 2000.

A lifetime – and legacy – of giving

Garage sales, bake sales and bottle collecting – these are just some of the ways that Gwendolen Crowe, and her husband John, raised money for Operation Eyesight over the years.

Although they are no longer with us, their legacy of giving continues today. When Gwendolen passed in 2020, she left our organization a generous gift in her will. It was a decision she and John, who passed away in 2019, had thoughtfully made together.

Born in Leicester in the United Kingdom in 1931, Gwendolen (or Gwen, to her friends) was known for her lively spirit and love of performing. She and John moved to Canada in 1957, settling in Vancouver where she became a mainstay in the area's theatre scene, acting, singing and directing for various theatre companies, all while working full time at CIBC and later at the BC Children's Hospital. One of her favourite roles was dressing up as Mrs. Claus, with John playing Santa, for the kids at Vancouver's Ronald McDonald House.

"She liked to laugh, she liked to bring joy to people," says Gwen's close friend, Jane Marynowski. "And I think this whole thing about

her charities that she was so attached to, was she knew she was bringing joy to other people's lives. That was important to her."

In her late sixties, Gwen took a trip to India to see some of our projects in person. She travelled with Marilyn Gullison, daughter of Dr. Ben Gullison, whose work in India inspired our founder Art Jenkyns to start Operation Eyesight. Although she was already a world traveller, the trip had a profound effect on Gwen.

"I think she found travelling in India to be a little different than her usual travels," says Jane, who heard a lot of stories about that trip from Gwen, even decades later. "I think that really strengthened this attitude of gratefulness that she had. What she saw over there really did have an impact."

Today, Gwen and John continue to make their own impact on people across the globe with their generous final gift, which will help us prevent blindness and restore sight for years to come. We are grateful to Gwen and John for their thoughtful, loyal support over the years!



Legacy giving: The gift that lasts *more* than a lifetime

Have you ever considered joining supporters like Gwen and John (*see inside*) in making a gift in your will? You could leave a legacy of preventing blindness and restoring sight.

Every dollar counts when it comes to eliminating avoidable vision loss, whether a donation is \$100 or \$1 million. In many of our countries of work, one cataract surgery, plus associated expenses, costs roughly \$75. The need for eye health care is great, and the stakes are high: 1.1 billion people live with vision loss and 90 per cent is avoidable.

To meet the growing need for eye care, we are scaling up our work. Support from donors like you is integral. Often, those who have given in their lifetimes through monthly, annual, or stock or annuity donations, are extending support beyond their lifetime by leaving a legacy gift in their will.

When you give a gift in your will, you can reduce estate taxes, helping you to continue to provide for your loved ones and your favourite organizations.





These gifts impact generations of people – everyone from premature babies who need

treatment to prevent blindness to seniors who want to maintain a life of dignity and independence.

Learn how you can leave a legacy of hope! Call us, visit operationeyesight.com/legacy or scan the code below.



Get in touch

-  1-800-585-8265
-  info@operationeyesight.com
-  operationeyesight.com
-  @OperationEyesightUniversal

Don't want to receive our newsletter anymore? Please contact us and we'll update your mailing preferences. You can also subscribe to our eNews at operationeyesight.com/signup