

## Seeing a Better Way – Shiley Eye Institute Celebrates 25 Years of Innovation

By Bonnie Ward | April 11, 2016

It has been a quarter century since a gift from Donald and Darlene Shiley marked the beginning of San Diego's first comprehensive eye care facility. Today, the Donald P. and Darlene V. Shiley Eye Institute at UC San Diego Health is a recognized leader with world renowned clinicians and scientists.



"Shiley has emerged as a hub for clinical care excellence, outstanding vision research and broad-based eye health education," said [Robert N. Weinreb, MD](#), chair and Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology at UC San Diego School of Medicine and director of the Shiley Eye Institute.

**With the Shiley Eye Institute celebrating its 25th anniversary, here's a look**

### back:

In 1990, when the center was still a dream, Stuart Brown, MD, then-chair of the UC San Diego School of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology approached the Shileys for help with funding some equipment. Instead, Donald Shiley wanted to hear more. "I will never forget how moved he was by Dr. Brown's description of the work being done and the work that still needed to be addressed," said Darlene Shiley, recalling her late husband's enthusiasm. Shiley was so impressed with Brown's vision for the future that he made the \$1 million leadership gift that catalyzed the construction of the UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center.

The \$8 million center debuted in 1991, with Brown at the helm, becoming the only academic eye care center in San Diego and the city's first comprehensive treatment and research vision center.

The ambition of the Shiley Eye Center team was to establish an eye center unrivalled in the region. To a remarkable degree, they have succeeded.

“By investing in unsurpassed facilities, equipment and brainpower, we have become a destination for preventing and curing blinding eye diseases for the residents of San Diego and beyond,” said Weinreb.

Over the years, doctors and researchers at Shiley Eye Institute have made major contributions to addressing some of the primary diseases of vision, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, corneal disorders and cataracts.

Recently, for example, they have been involved in developing a smart contact lens that wirelessly monitors intraocular pressure (a key risk factor in glaucoma) and the use of self-renewing stem cells to repair or restore vision lost to diseases like macular degeneration, glaucoma and corneal opacity.

Weinreb is focused on patient-centric care excellence and leading the institute into new areas of eye research and treatment. For example, the Richard C. Atkinson Laboratory for Regenerative Ophthalmology was established with an anonymous \$6.5 million gift from a grateful patient last year. The new lab will investigate cell replacement therapies, tissue engineering, stem cell approaches and other biomedical advances to reverse vision loss and blindness.

In addition, a new Vision Research Center is in the early stages of planning along with the creation of a framework to fund the project. The center will accelerate the translation of new research into treatments to cure patients with blinding eye diseases.

“Successful past, bright future – how lucky we all are to have such dedicated physicians, researchers, staff and eager volunteers,” said Darlene Shiley, who has remained a staunch supporter over the years.

### **Some Shiley Eye Institute highlights:**

#### **2015**

- → The UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center was renamed the UC San Diego Donald P. and Darlene V. Shiley Eye Institute, encompassing the Shiley Eye Center, the Anne F. and Abraham Ratner Children’s Eye Center, the Hamilton Glaucoma Center and the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Retina Center.

#### **2014**

- → The Department of Ophthalmology was awarded a prestigious K12 grant from the NIH to train outstanding clinician scientists, one of just a few such grants in the country.

- → The Stuart I. Brown Chair in Ophthalmology in Memory of Donald P. Shiley was established with a gift from Darlene Shiley. [Natalie A. Afshari, MD](#), is the first to hold the endowed chair.

## **2012**

- → The Ophthalmic BioBank was launched under the direction of Radha Ayyagari, PhD, professor of Ophthalmology, and Linda Zangwill, PhD, professor of Ophthalmology. The bank provides a library of blood, tissue, and biological fluid samples collected from consenting patients with ophthalmic diseases. The samples will help to accelerate research into new treatments for eye diseases and to prevent blindness.

## **2011**

- → Robert N. Weinreb, MD, was appointed chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and director of the Shiley Eye Center.

## **2006**

- → A major expansion project was completed thanks to a gift from Darlene Shiley. The project added glaucoma and retina clinics, faculty offices and labs and a new surgery recovery room.

## **2004**

- → The Joan and Irwin Jacobs Retina Center was opened under the direction of William R. Freeman, MD, vice-chair, Department of Ophthalmology, Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology. The center is home to research on retina disorders and gives patients access to the latest advances in diagnostic equipment and therapies.
- → The Hamilton Glaucoma Center was opened under the direction of Robert N. Weinreb, MD, Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology and holder of the Morris Gleich, MD Chair of Glaucoma. The center offers unsurpassed comprehensive diagnostic and specialized treatment services for glaucoma, including optic nerve imaging, anterior segment imaging, functional testing and a 24-hour diagnostic and treatment unit.

## **2001**

- → The Shiley EyeMobile for Children became the first state-of-the-art clinic on wheels dedicated to preschool children. Each year, the EyeMobile provides free vision screenings to thousands of children throughout San Diego County, with a particular focus on underserved communities. In 2014 alone, the mobile unit conducted 12,238 vision screenings, 2,011 eye exams, dispensed 1,288 pairs of free glasses and referred numerous children for more serious follow up care.

## 1996

- → The Circle of Sight, a vision lecture series, held its first program. The series, presented several times a year, features Shiley physicians and scientists discussing leading-edge vision issues.

## 1995

- → The Anne F. and Abraham Ratner Children's Eye Center opened and focuses on the prevention and treatment of vision loss and ocular problems in children. The center is under the direction of [David Granet, MD](#), director of the Division of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Eye Alignment Disorders. Granet is also the Anne Ratner Chair of Pediatric Ophthalmology, an endowed faculty chair created through a gift from Mrs. Ratner.

## 1991

- → Opening of the UC San Diego Shiley Eye Center on the UC San Diego campus in La Jolla.

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