

## LEBW CABINET REPORT

- We ONCE AGAIN, LEBW served more donors and families and placed more tissue over the past FY than ever before.
- For FY 2016-2017, we served 1117 Donors and their families

BTW – I'm not sure how many of you are aware, but there are 3 tissue banks that serve the state of Wisconsin. And LEBW served more donor families than all 3 tissue banks combined, both in 2015 AND 2016!! Both donors served and corneas placed were up more than 25% in both 2015 & 2016 than in 2014.

### GREAT WORK DONE OVER THE PAST FY INCLUDES:

- Providing 1586 corneas for Transplant
- Our Transplant rate also increased from 69% to 72%.
- We also increased our Research/Education placements by 19% over the past year...more than 300 tissues recovered were utilized for R/E.
- 630 DSEAK processing procedures were also performed in-house.

While we continue to push ourselves to serve more families, expand our services, and to achieve our process improvement goals, we unfortunately have been faced with challenges along the way.

One challenge, in particular, is that of competition. The B.O.D. and our Executive Director Darice Langhaml have been discussing the shift in the climate of eye banking for about 2 years now. While cornea donation and transplantation was once more of a service to society, it is quickly becoming a serious business...a business with high financial stakes. This field is changing fast, particularly at the hands of one company - SightLife. SightLife, based in Seattle Washington, launched a for-profit subsidiary in Oct. 2016, SightLife Surgical. Essentially, SightLife (itself) remains non-profit and performs the recovery of the corneas. In other words...they take the gift. The gift is then passed to their for-profit company where the remainder of the donation process takes place through distribution of corneas for transplant.

Since launching their for-profit spin off company, they have been aggressively expanding their footprint, gaining the market-share by teaming up with Organ Procurement Organizations. Prior to moving into Wisconsin, they seemed to only be targeting underserved areas, pushing out those eye banks who didn't capture every donation opportunity and maximize every placement opportunity.

But earlier this year, the BloodCenter of Wisconsin (our OPO partner out of Milwaukee) contacted SightLife to explore partnership opportunities. They finalized an agreement together and have been working diligently in the Milwaukee service area over the past several months to convince hospitals to abandon their partnership with LEBW. We believe that, because BCW does not truly understand the inner-workings of eye

banking, they cannot begin to appreciate the negative impact their new partnership with SightLife could have on our community.

- It is important to know. SightLife has not established a business in Wisconsin. They have no intention of being here or serving our state. They have merely employed a few SE Wisconsin based per diem cornea recovery technicians who will be dispatched to report to MKE recovery facilities to recover corneas from our residents who selflessly donated this altruistic gift of sight. They will then drive the corneas to the airport so they can be flown to Seattle Washington for SightLife Surgical (their for-profit arm) to use as they see fit.

We have put the wheels in motion and, fortunately, it appears we got out ahead of this thing. We feel confident in our position and know LEBW will continue to thrive, despite this bump in the road. To date, we have met with MKE based hospitals to ensure they understand the facts...what we do, why we do it, and how it affects our community. Our story also seems to be generating some interest with state representatives as well as within the media. SightLife may have a slick presentation, but we are telling the REAL story. And that seems to be appreciated by those we've encountered.

#### LIONS CALL TO ACTION (YOU CAN AFFECT CHANGE):

There have been discussions amongst the Lions of Wisconsin as to whether you continue to support BCW's blood drives. Many Lions Clubs have been staunch supporters of the BloodCenter of Wisconsin for years, promoting their drives and giving your own blood. They are obviously not, however, acting in kind. They are attempting to displace your Lions Eye Bank. Apparently, there was no consideration as to potential consequences of their latest business move. While we absolutely need to continue to donate blood...we would encourage you to begin teaming up with American Red Cross to continue these efforts. AND inform BCW that you are doing so. This will definitely send a message to BCW that the Lions are not going to stand by while they threaten the existence of the eye bank. Executive Darice Langham has a letter already drafted that can be used. Just reach out to her and she will be more than happy to provide you with a copy.

You can also show your support just by simply sharing the message:

- We are local.
- We are non-profit.
- We are committed to protecting the altruistic spirit of donation.
- We are committed to ensuring Wisconsin residents have quality corneas for their transplants.
- We are serving those in need in our community first!

While our eye bank has always been striving for greatness...something like this certainly makes you push just a little bit harder. And that is exactly what we are doing. Our goal is to protect our very generous state, full of residents who agree to donate

upon their passing. We need to protect the altruistic spirit of the donation at all cost. If we do not, public trust will be broken...our community may perceive SightLife's business practices as exploiting the blind. Eye/cornea donation will not just suffer, so will organ donation. And we will find ourselves trying to pick up the pieces to regain that trust for many years to come. We are fighting this with all we have...we appreciate your continued support.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald K. Blawusch".

Ron Blawusch