



Oregon State Elks
70 years
of partnership

70



"We can't thank the Oregon Elks enough for their tremendous and tireless support. Their generous donations over many decades have made it possible for the Elks Children's Eye Clinic at OHSU to help countless children receive the gift of sight."

– Dr. David Wilson

70



The Oregon State Elks and the Casey Eye Institute

As you arrive at the Casey Eye Institute on the campus of OHSU, you will probably notice the likeness of a large elk across from the main building. Cast in bronze by renowned wildlife artist Rip Caswell, the statue cuts a regal figure, perched atop a pedestal and framed by the VA Medical Center and the OHSU hospital.

This fixture, however, is more than just an artistic flourish in the nucleus of Portland's scientific community. Rather, it stands as a testament to great insight, the triumph of collaboration, and the unique, enduring relationship between the eye institute and one of the oldest and largest philanthropic organizations in the country: the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

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1949

Mid-Century Beginnings

The friendship between the Oregon Elks and OHSU's Department of Ophthalmology took root as the United States emerged from World War II. After two decades of an economic depression and global conflict, the country experienced an era of economic prosperity which in turn brought a new sense of resolution, security, and national optimism.

Fueled by advances in knowledge and technology, the medical community underwent a similar resurgence. During the war, researchers had developed novel methods for the diagnosis and treatment of a wide variety of diseases. After the fighting stopped, many of these innovations became available for civilians. Hospitals, better equipped than ever to preserve life and speed recovery, made great leaps forward in many sectors of medical science.

But with these new triumphs came new challenges; many whose lives had been saved were consigned to living with debilitating conditions. At OHSU (then known as the University of Oregon Medical School), such was the case for prematurely born infants. By the late 1940s, the survival rate of these children had improved immensely; however, nearly one in four faced

a lifetime of blindness due to retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), a condition caused by abnormal blood vessel growth in retinal tissue.

Physicians working with these cases recognized the immediate need for a complex understanding of ocular development. As Dr. Kenneth C. Swan—founder of OHSU's Department of Ophthalmology—reports in his papers:

To give these infants sight as well as life, a multi-phased program was needed. It would include research to prevent the condition, new technology to treat it, and special education programs to prepare the blind children and their parents to cope with our competitive society.

But Dr. Swan further notes that the nascent state of Oregon ophthalmology presented several major obstacles for such an initiative:

There were only a few ophthalmologists in the territory and they were located in metropolitan centers. There was practically no research activity so advances in medicine in fields like ophthalmology belatedly trickled in from other areas... We literally began a program operating on a shoestring.

The University of Oregon Medical School could scarcely cover the current demand for ophthalmological services, let alone muster the resources for a new venture into saving the sight of prematurely born children.

In 1949, the number of babies threatened by ROP included the young twin sons of Clackamas County Judge Robert Mulvey. A member of the Oregon City Elks—a local branch of the BPOE—Judge Mulvey asked his Elk brothers to help Dr. Swan in his endeavor.

The timing was serendipitous. The Oregon Elks were in the process of selecting a major cause to serve as their capstone project to fulfill the charitable tenets of their mission. When Dr.

"Gentlemen, it is a real pleasure and a sincere pleasure to be here among you to present a problem to you and to seek your help in its solution. The problem with which we are concerned has multiple components; not only the care of children who cannot receive it elsewhere, but teaching and research in diseases of the eye..."

— Dr. Kenneth Swan presents his case at the Oregon Elks Midwinter Meeting, Jan. 22nd, 1949.

Swan explained the issue at an Elks meeting in January of that year, they not only agreed to support his research, but to direct their considerable efforts towards youth eye care.

The Elks created the Oregon State Elks Association Eye Clinic Committee, which was dedicated to allocating the funds raised for the project. Their inaugural donation of \$2,000—enough to buy a 1949 Buick Special—purchased an oximeter, which allowed doctors to test the amount of oxygen in the blood of premature babies. The data taken from such measurements would later confirm that excessive oxygen was a principal cause of ROP. With this discovery, doctors in the Department of Ophthalmology developed treatment measures for ROP that would allow premature children to retain their sight. The Elks' generosity, combined with the ingenuity of the medical school faculty, ensured that the newly forged partnership would have a successful beginning.



A physician holds the attachments to the original 1949 oximeter.

50-60s

The Elks' Vision for the Future

The early accomplishments of the program led the Oregon Elks to increase their involvement. Working with Dr. Swan, other ophthalmologists, and officials from the Oregon School for the Blind in Salem, the Elks developed a program under the name "Vision for the Future." The program, funded by the Elks and implemented by the medical school, would come to set the standard for pediatric eye care in the United States.

The Vision for the Future initiative was an immediate success. Its flagship institution, the Elks Children's Eye Clinic, became a hub for pediatric eye care throughout the Northwest. In its first 25 years, the fledgling clinic handled over 130 visits per month and provided state-of-the-art care to more than 25,000 children.

"Where we had expected hundreds of examinations and treatments, there were thousands"

– H.M. "Hal" Randall, original Visual Program Committee member

But the program comprised more than just treatment. The Elks' Vision for the Future centered on Dr. Swan's model for youth eye care, which included prevention, research and

special education. Elks and doctors teamed with educators to create a living skills/parental education initiative at the Oregon School for the Blind. Both this effort and the clinic were the first of their kind in the United States.

Innovation would become a hallmark of the Department of Ophthalmology and its sponsors. With the support of the Oregon Elks, Dr. Swan and fellow ophthalmologist Dr. Leonard Christensen designed the first microscope for ophthalmic surgery, which was then employed in the world's first ocular microsurgery. In the following years, Elks' contributions paved the way for fundamental advances in the use of lasers, ultrasound, fiber-optic photography, cryosurgery and other techniques that allowed doctors to prevent and treat previously intractable ocular conditions.

Meanwhile, the Oregon Elks made remarkable leaps in funding the operation. The Vision for the Future program, originally financed by 60-cent donations from each member, had garnered reserves exceeding \$120,000 by the early 1960s, which equates to nearly \$1 million today, adjusting for inflation. Some Elks had hoped to see this money spent immediately to improve existing

efforts in Oregon, while others wanted a strategy to support youth eye care in the long term.

Choosing the second route, in January 1963 the Oregon Elks launched a separate nonprofit corporation under the name Elks Youth Eye Service (EYES) to invest the money raised. The original five-member EYES Committee, composed of prominent Elks Louie Cline, Val Bulger, Frank Hise, H.M. "Hal" Randall, and the previously mentioned Judge Mulvey, was responsible for financial management of the donations. Louie Cline would later praise the committee and the cause during an Elks gathering in the summer of 1964:

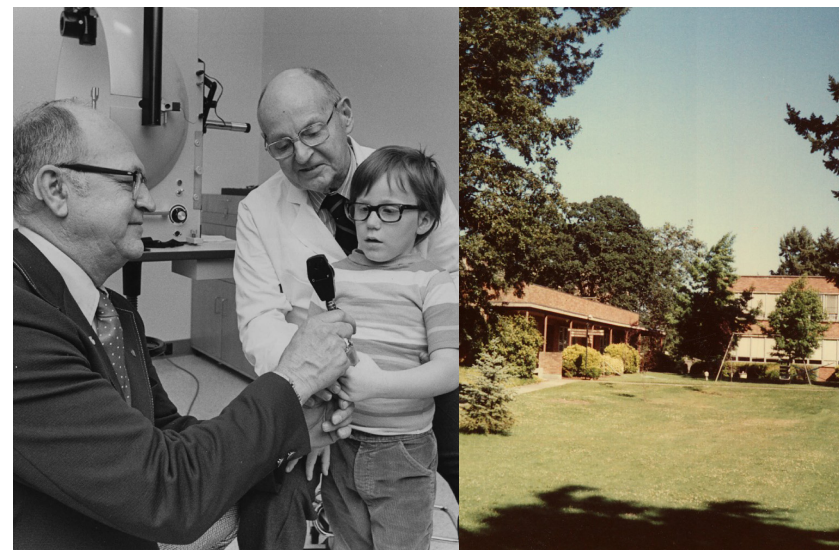
"Before the Elks got involved, we didn't have enough equipment to adequately examine an eye let alone perform effective surgery"

– Dr. Leonard Christensen, Founder and Director, OHSU Eye Pathology Laboratory, Elks Brochure Draft, Feb. 25, 1986

In my 36 years of Elkdom I've worked on many committees but never have I found the earnestness, the self-sacrifice and the devotion that has prompted [The EYES committee's] every action. I am proud of my association with them in this work, which I expect to live to see, the greatest Elks project in the United States ("Oregon Elks Summer Gathering 1964: Official Minutes")

The Elks also restructured the Eye Clinic Committee, renaming it the Visual Program Committee and making it responsible for the funds generated by the nonprofit. The Visual Program Committee provided the initial funds of \$20,000 to the EYES committee after it was formed. According to its articles of incorporation, EYES was created:

To provide charitable care and treatment for Oregon children with visual handicaps; to finance research into the causes, treatment and cure of visual defects of children and to promote educational facilities for teaching doctors and technicians; to provide the educational and recreational aid to visually handicapped children and to provide social services for such children.



Left: Elks Past Exalted Ruler Loyal Morey presents a Proper Ophthalmoscope, donated by the Milwaukie Lodge, to patient Miles Keeley and Dr. Kenneth Swan; Right: the Oregon School for the Blind

70s

Success & Expansion

On the medical side, word of the program's achievements travelled, and by the onset of the 1970s the Elks Children's Eye Clinic had caught the attention of the national media. Such renown prompted the National Council to Combat Blindness (NCCB, now known as Fight for Sight) to evaluate the clinic. As a result, the NCCB modeled seven of their facilities after the Elks clinic in Oregon.

To this point, the Oregon Elks had contributed more than \$1 million to pediatric eye care at the Elks Children's Eye Clinic and elsewhere, and the initial investment in EYES had grown to \$200,000 by 1973, beating inflation by a

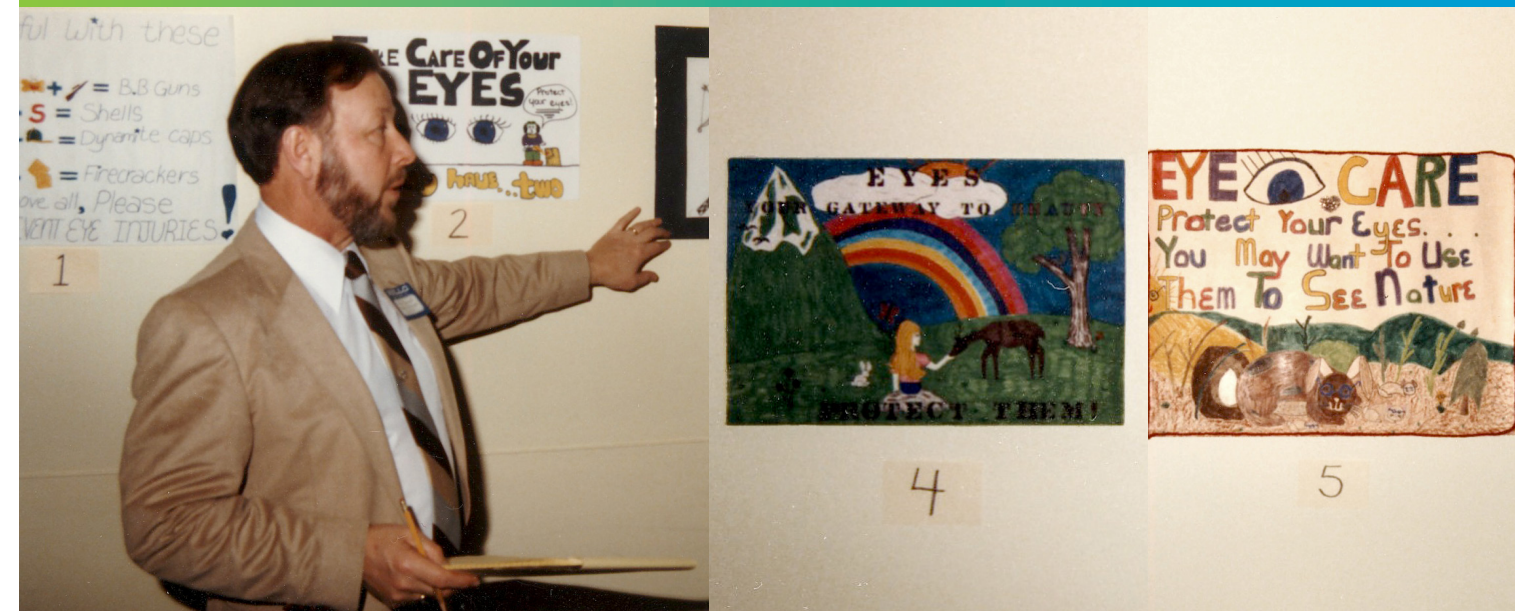
factor of twenty and generating \$7,500 per year. That year, a young investment manager named Dale Benson was assigned to the EYES portfolio. The EYES Committee presented him with an ambitious goal: build the fund to \$10 million. Aided by the unparalleled altruism of the Elks and his own financial acumen, Benson surpassed that milestone in the late 1980s.

Just as the EYES fund grew, so grew the Elks Children's Eye Clinic. Having moved to the University Hospital in 1956, the clinic expanded into a new state-of-the-art facility in 1976, bolstered yet again by \$200,000 of new equipment, courtesy of the Oregon Elks. Dr. Swan was ecstatic:

Thanks to the generous support of the Elks of Oregon, the Children's Eye Clinic program has been a contributor to as well as a user of [the] enormous technological progress which has been occurring in recent years. Advanced photographic techniques, ultrasonography, and electrophysiology, and laser interferometry have advanced the quality of care in the children's clinic by improving diagnosis. New techniques have included a third generation of lasers, cryosurgery, and operations performed deep within the interior of the eye.

In addition to these technological advances, new education efforts arose to spread awareness concerning eye safety. In one popular program, schoolchildren competed for prizes in a contest for the best safety poster. More than 5,000 entries were submitted during each year of its duration.

Eye safety posters created by children as entries into the Elks' Eye Safety Poster Contest



80-85

The Elks' Vision for the Future

In 1978, after nearly thirty years of innovation and success, Dr. Swan retired as chair of the Department of Ophthalmology, though he maintained his strong ties to both the Elks community and pediatric ophthalmology. His continued presence allowed for a smooth transition into the 1980s, a period that brought its own challenges and triumphs.

During this time, the program grew to include veterans and adult patients, and less than a decade after the dedication of its new facility, the clinic had doubled its patient load to more than 250 per month. As the number of patients increased, expansion became imperative; under the direction of Dr. Frederick Fraunfelder—Dr. Swan's successor as department chair—plans were drawn to build a new wing onto the existing clinic. The addition would cost \$1 million.

"The worst aspect of this disease is that these babies go through so much just to survive and then they lose their sight. Our study results demonstrate the first proven treatment for ROP in the 40 years since its first recognition."

– Dr. Earl Palmer

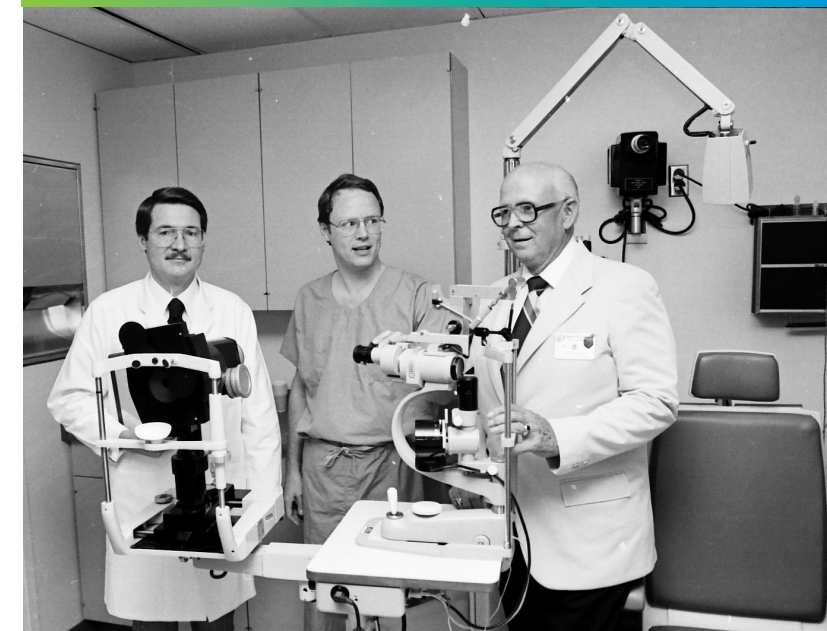
In the meantime, the Elks augmented their support with purchases both large and small. In 1982, the Elks Children's Eye Clinic received a new krypton laser for the treatment of ocular disorders such as diabetes and retinal tears as part of a \$70,000 gift. The Elkettes of Gateway, Oregon added their own \$4,550 contribution to purchase a photokeratoscope—a device normally used to measure the curvature of the cornea in adults—for use in youth treatment.

Researchers at the clinic, in turn, ramped up their efforts. In 1985, Dr. Earl Palmer (then director of pediatric ophthalmology) launched a large-scale clinical study of new treatment methods for retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). The study comprised patients at 20 major hospitals across North America, and tested new treatment methods for the condition that initially brought the Oregon Elks into the ophthalmological field. Building on knowledge that excessive oxygenation of the retina was a major cause of ROP, Dr. Palmer and his colleagues proposed limiting the blood flow to the area through cryotherapy (a method in which doctors freeze portions of the retina to prevent excessive vascularization) and photocoagulation (a process that uses a laser to inhibit abnormal blood vessel growth). Findings from this study revolutionized eye care for children around the world by showing

that ROP could be treated successfully, and that premature infants could be prevented from a lifetime of blindness.

Throughout the process, Dr. Palmer established close ties with the Elks. He spoke at numerous lodges, and even went on a whitewater rafting trip with several Elks leaders. The Elks, in turn, published a monthly newsletter to update their members on the status of the clinic. As a result, Dr. Palmer never struggled to obtain the necessary equipment for his work at the Elks' Children's Eye Clinic.

Dr. Earl Palmer (left) and Dr. Larry Rich (center) with new equipment donated by the Elks



85-91

The Building of Casey Eye Institute

During the latter half of the 1980s, it became clear that the new wing for the Elks Children's Eye Clinic was not to be. Instead, Dr. Fraunfelder, with the support of the Oregon Elks, launched a still more ambitious project: a new building dedicated entirely to the field of ophthalmology.

In addition to providing more space for general eye treatment—the Department of Ophthalmology had outgrown its home in the University Hospital sky bridge—the new center aimed to bring disparate research and treatment activities to one central facility. A fundraising brochure described the benefits of the proposal:

In addition to meeting the need for a regional referral and information center to bring advances in ophthalmology to the Northwest, the Center's specialized facilities will be made available to practicing ophthalmologists. The family eye doctor will be able to bring his or her patients to the Center, assist in advanced

procedures and use state-of-the-art equipment in hands-on cooperation with the Center faculty and staff. ("The Oregon Elks' Gift to the World," 1986)

With its many advantages, the new site seemed predestined for success. As work began, though, the project ran into a pair of major pitfalls. The Department of Ophthalmology could not secure state funding for the new center, and estimates for the costs of its construction ran higher than expected. It seemed as though the plans would be scuttled for lack of support.

The irrepressible Dr. Fraunfelder nonetheless continued to pursue fundraising efforts. By 1986, he had secured significant patient and faculty donations, and had even called upon Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield, whose support yielded \$1 million in federal funding.

Still facing a deficit, however, Dr. Fraunfelder turned once again to the Elks, who quickly mobilized their extensive network to support the endeavor. Not long after, Dr. Fraunfelder met with Harry Casey, a prominent member of the Portland lodge. As a businessman, Mr. Casey had amassed his own personal wealth operating several Buick dealerships throughout the Pacific Northwest. As an Oregon Elk, he had cultivated a passion for altruistic endeavors. After establishing a relationship with Dr. Fraunfelder—the two often conversed over dinner—Mr. Casey, along with his sister, donated \$7.3 million in honor of their

"[The new Eye Center] is a well-planned project and deserves the support of not only the many communities it will serve but also the federal government"

— Senator Mark Hatfield, 1986]

brothers James and George, the founders of the United Parcel Service. Dr. Fraunfelder and Harry Casey met for the first time in 1985. Six years later, the James and George Casey Eye Institute at OHSU officially opened its doors.

Elks Frank Hise (PGER) and Don Jensen (EYES Director) provide critical financial support for the new Casey Eye Institute housing an expanded Elks Children's Eye Clinic during the late 1980s. Also pictured are Dr. Fritz Fraunfelder, Chairman, Department of Ophthalmology, Dr. Peter Kohler, OHSU President, Dr. Kenneth Swan, and Senator Mark Hatfield.



1990s

A new era in research and care

The construction of the new eye institute marked an inflection point for both the Oregon Elks and for ophthalmology in Oregon. The Oregon Elks were instrumental throughout the process, raising awareness across their membership, supporting equipment purchases, and outfitting whole exam rooms. Their decision to support youth eye care for the

long term, meanwhile, had proven prophetic. The Elks Youth Eye Service had surpassed its \$10 million goal, and the Elks as a whole accounted for several hundred thousand dollars of contributions per year.

Oregon Elks lodges raised funds to outfit individual examination rooms, as well as



Bruce Reed with David Wilson at the volunteer desk – Bruce Reed has been supporting the Elks Children's Eye Clinic for 72 years and continues to volunteer his service to patients visiting the Eye Institute.

(Left) Elks' volunteers patch together material to create colorful quilts for children undergoing eye surgery (right).



providing funding for equipment to be used throughout the eye institute. The new institute promised to revolutionize ophthalmic care throughout the Pacific Northwest. With its 54 exam rooms, four operating rooms, nine lasers, and four minor-surgery spaces, the facility provided the capacity and technology to expand and serve more patients than ever. Before the new building opened, 60 percent of eye surgeries were inpatient procedures that were lengthy and disruptive for patients. Afterward, 90 percent could be performed as outpatient surgery.

The new eye institute building also provided a way for the Oregon Elks membership to personally participate in their major state project. Since the completion of the building,

Elks volunteers have dedicated 240,000 hours of service at the eye institute.

In addition, Elks quilters have provided each and every child having eye surgery a handcrafted quilt, bringing them a sense of comfort and security.

But the revolution did not confine itself to standard, practical issues. The pristine space, combined with the Elks' expansive philanthropy, freed researchers to explore cutting-edge issues in medical science. What had begun with Dr. Palmer's cryotherapy study—the findings of which had been published in 1988 to national acclaim—began to evolve into a dynamic, multifaceted program encompassing ocular infections, retinoblastoma, and gene therapy.

2000s

Thriving in a new century

With the availability of space, resources and a committed faculty and community, the new century brought amazing growth and innovation, essentially creating a golden age for the Oregon State Elks Children's Eye Clinic. Elks' programs expanded and reached every corner of the state. This golden age was enabled by two inspirational and dedicated advocates and participants in the Elks Children's Eye Clinic Programs: Dan Karr, the Head of the Pediatric Ophthalmology Division, and Joannah Vaughan, OHSU Elks Liaison.

In 2003, the Elks Children's Eye Clinic launched what has become one of the most far-reaching

and comprehensive efforts in Oregon to safeguard childhood vision. Recognizing that many vision disorders – such as amblyopia – can be prevented if detected and treated before age 5, the clinic formed partnerships with Head Starts, public libraries, schools and other community groups to screen youngsters who may not have access to these sight-saving services.

The Oregon State Elks have been key to the program's success, providing financial support and enthusiastic volunteers from its statewide network of local lodges to assist in the screenings. Using the latest photo screening technology, the children's eyes are measured instantly, with results immediately available. Some 8,000 youngsters are screened annually, with more than 700 referred to an eye doctor for a potential vision problem. The Elks have assured the children and families of Oregon that all children will receive eye care, regardless of their circumstances. The program also served as a prototype for Oregon's school vision screening legislation enacted in 2013.

The Oregon Elks' commitment to serving children throughout the state also led to the opening in 2016 of a new pediatric ophthalmology clinic in Bend,

Dr. Michael Chiang in the Oregon State Elks
Ophthalmic Informatics Center



Oregon. The practice, seeded by the Oregon Elks and enthusiastically endorsed by the local ophthalmology community, provides a full spectrum of much needed pediatric eye care to Central and Eastern Oregon.

The Elks also stepped up to boost the recruitment and training of future pediatric ophthalmologists, a subspecialty in which fellowship programs outnumber candidates and recruitment of fellows is highly competitive. Thanks to a substantial endowment of \$500,000 from the Oregon Elks' Visual Committee in 2008, the Elks Children's Eye Clinic's has been able to attract outstanding candidates to its high caliber program. The program is one of the most prestigious pediatric ophthalmology fellowships in the country, and to date 16 fellows have been trained because of the Elks' generous support.

By the second decade, the diagnosis and management of ROP entered a new era through the innovative use of biomedical informatics, computer-based image analysis and telemedicine.

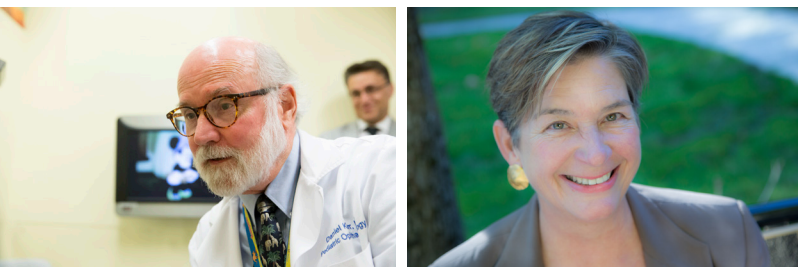
Leading the Elks Children's Eye Clinic into this new frontier is pediatric ophthalmologist Michael

“What drew me to OHSU was its strong standing across the board. Casey has such a rich history in ROP because of the achievements of ophthalmologists like Earl Palmer and Bob Watzke,”

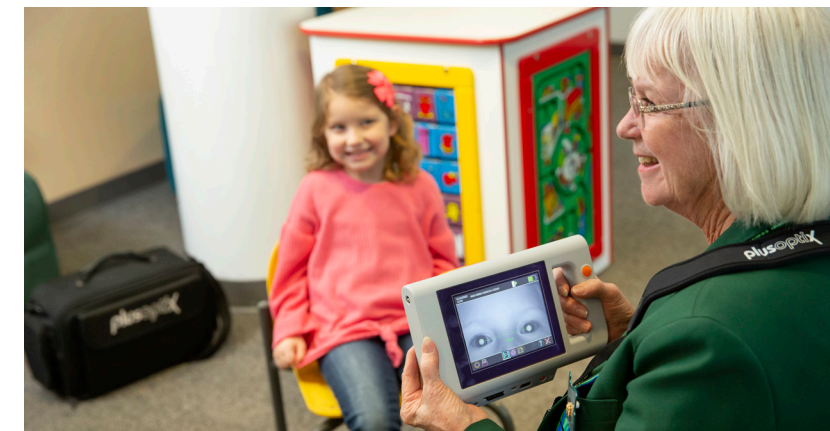
– Dr. Michael Chiang, Fall 2010 Casey newsletter [In Full View](#)

Chiang, M.D., M.A., an international authority in the field recruited from Columbia University to build an ophthalmic informatics program.

Under Dr. Chiang's guidance, ROP screening entered the era of tele-ophthalmology. The Elks provided sophisticated cameras that could be used by neonatal intensive care unit nurses to photograph the eyes of the tiny newborns. This method of screening for ROP is accurate while being less traumatic for the infants, and results in improved accessibility to world-class eye care for premature infants. Also, bolstered by funding support from the Oregon State Elks, Dr. Chiang and colleagues designed a diagnostic device that uses an artificial intelligence algorithm to detect the disease better than most expert physicians. In early 2020, the FDA granted the technology breakthrough status to



Left: Dr. Daniel Karr, member of the Oregon City Lodge, has been Director of the Elks Children's Eye Clinic since 2006; Right: As Elks Liaison, Joannah Vaughan has been instrumental in the coordinated development of many Elks' programs, including the nationally recognized Elks Preschool Vision Screening Program.



Mary Williams, OSEA past president, performs vision screening.

accelerate its development and possible approval. These telemedicine and artificial intelligence tools will be particularly helpful in remote areas without specially trained practitioners to screen infants for the condition.

As the Elks Children's Eye Clinic flourished, Casey renewed its commitment to ending preventable blindness in Oregon and beyond. Not only were pediatric eye care services and its outreach program running at full throttle, but Casey's groundbreaking gene therapy program and other ophthalmology services were rapidly growing in size and scope. It became apparent that more space was needed to better serve patients, promote collaborations between researchers and clinicians and house the latest technologies and tools.

"To effectively treat many childhood eye conditions, they must be discovered early and accurately diagnosed. The new clinic will enable us to provide timely care to far more children through our nationally-recognized vision screening and treatment programs,"

– Dr. Daniel Karr, director of the Elks Children's Eye Clinic., Summer 2019 FY Eye newsletter)

Once again, the Oregon Elks played a central role in this next exciting stage. Backed by a \$20 million pledge from the fraternal organization, plans were devised for a new state-of-the-art facility to be constructed next to the existing Casey building on Marquam Hill. The nation's first freestanding pediatric eye clinic, the \$50 million building was named the Elks Children's Eye Clinic in recognition of the fraternal order's significant philanthropic investment.

At the June 2018 groundbreaking ceremony for the new structure, leaders from the Oregon Elks and OHSU - including Jim Damon, the 1990-91 Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks' Grand Exalted Ruler, OHSU president and former Casey chair Dr. Joe Robertson, and Casey Eye Institute Director David Wilson – recalled OHSU's early association with the Elks to advance children's eye care and celebrated a partnership that has endured for more than seven decades.



Jim Damon (left), Dr. David Wilson (center), and Dr. Joe Robertson (right) enjoy the groundbreaking for the Oregon Elks Children's Eye Clinic.



Set to open in December 2020, the new 60,000 square foot building is home to an expanded pediatric eye clinic, ROP telemedicine, outreach programs, retina services, vision rehabilitation, the Paul H. Casey Ophthalmic Genetics floor and a clinical trials center.

During its construction, the new clinic earned several awards for its inspired and thoughtful design to accommodate all visual abilities, such as using contrast colors on floors, walls and signage to help patients navigate inside the building.

"Directly or indirectly, every child that we treat benefits from the Oregon State Elks. They have shown me what can happen when a group of people get together and mobilize. They've shown me that real people can make a real difference."

– Dr. Michael Chiang, associate director of Casey Eye Institute and professor of ophthalmology and medical informatics in a May 2018 news release about groundbreaking

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– Dr. Michael Chiang, associate director of Casey Eye Institute and professor of ophthalmology and medical informatics in a May 2018 news release about groundbreaking

"We can't thank the Oregon Elks enough for their tremendous and tireless support. Their generous donations over many decades have made it possible for the Elks Children's Eye Clinic at OHSU to help countless children receive the gift of sight."

– Dr. David Wilson





The Oregon Elks have left an indelible imprint on the history of ophthalmology in Oregon. The traces of their influence can be found everywhere. The names of prominent Oregon Elks brothers adorn conference halls, exam rooms, and medical equipment. In the lobby of the new Elks Children's Eye Clinic, the name of every Elk lodge in Oregon greets patients as they enter this remarkable facility.

And of course, the new space would not be complete without Rip Caswell's majestic Elk, temporarily removed during construction of the new building. Happily, the stately bronze figure has returned to its former place of honor, welcoming patients, families and visitors entering the eye clinic's doors.