

in focus

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The Perfect Gift

Many parents wonder what to get their son or daughter for graduation or as a wedding present. In the first of a two-part series on **The Gift of Laser Vision Correction**, newly-weds Jason Bird and Andrea Faulkner talk about their special day, life after lenses, and the 'most useful gift of all'.

David Napier

With their son and his long-time girlfriend approaching their wedding day, Eldon and Sharon Bird had some serious thinking to do. They mused about what to get a 'good kid' and his lovely wife-to-be as a gift.

The light bulb crackled to life over their heads when Eldon's boss told him that Focus Eye Centre was delivering outstanding results with Wavefront laser vision correction. Eldon had heard his son, Jason, and fiancée, Andrea Faulkner, discuss laser vision correction, but now the procedure presented itself as, well, the perfect present.

"We'd looked into it and decided that we couldn't afford it," says Andrea. "It was Jason's parents who gave us the go-ahead to have it done."

"The kids had talked about it so [Sharon and I] decided this is what we are getting you," says Eldon, whose matter-of-fact manner rushes out to meet the listener. "It's something they

will have for life." Perhaps not the typical wedding gift of a blender or set of bedding, but as Eldon says, "It's never going to wear out."

The idea of having glasses on for her wedding ceremony and reception was not something Andrea wanted.

"Wearing glasses on my wedding day — that didn't fit with my vision of a wedding," says Andrea, a social worker in the Ottawa area. "Glasses are awkward and not always the most beautiful accessory." Besides, she adds, "I wanted to be able to see everyone around me", including those delivering toasts from across the room. "I wanted to be able to see the expressions on their faces," she says.

So how did it go? Andrea's memories, like her vision, are wonderful. "The day was a blur to us, but it wasn't blurry."

As for Jason, he echoes the sentiments of his father, citing the lasting positive effects of laser vision correction. Jason, 30, is a Product Developer for Montreal-based Mission-Itech Hockey who lays claim to having designed the "Intake" helmet that Ottawa Senators Right Winger Chris Neil and dozens of other NHLers wear these days.

Jason says Wavefront laser vision correction has changed everything. "Now when I am looking around there is no straining; both eyes work together. I am on the computer constantly every



Andrea and Jason Bird

day and I have to look at a lot of hand stitching," explains the Industrial Design grad from Humber College, who admits the prospect of losing any functionality in either his eyes or hands is a frightening proposition.

Jason's job is about two things — design and details — and if he comes up short in either aspect, the company could end up looking like a goalie wandering out of his net.

It's not enough to count the stitches on a hockey bag or pair of skates, says Jason. "It's my job to pick up on the width of the stitch." He did just that not long ago. The product was a new hockey bag that Mission-Itech was making. They wanted it to look as good as their previous model and better than the competition's but Jason noticed that the stitches were 3mm long and 1mm wide, versus Mission-Itech's ear-

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Michelle Owen
Manager, Focus Eye
Centre, Kingston

A Soldier's Story

A visit to the Kingston Family Military Resource Centre (www.kmfr.com) reveals that we have just over 3,000 military families here in the Kingston area. At Focus we are getting to know more and more of them as they embark on a life changing experience.

Soldiers sent overseas for months at a time, often find corrective lenses are a hassle and even a liability if their glasses are lost or broken, or their contacts get torn. At the very least, soldiers need to ensure that extras are brought along.

Alleviating the worry surrounding glasses and contacts is a significant relief. Such was the case with Lee (not his real name), who served in Afghanistan in the fall of 2006. Before this dangerous tour of duty, the 46-year-old soldier decided to enhance his combat skills by doing something that an increasing number of brothers- and sisters-in-arms have already done: visit Focus Eye Centre and have a Wavefront laser vision correction (LVC) procedure.

Lee's decision in December of 2005 to have a Wavefront PRK procedure put him in good company. Laser vision correction is widely accepted throughout the military in Canada and the U.S., notably among American fighter pilots who routinely choose the more precise Wavefront-guided procedure because it often delivers better vision than the patient ever had with glasses or contacts. (The Wavefront results at Focus are so good that it has become our Standard of Care.)

Working with the local military base to ensure that our soldiers are being well educated about LVC and Wavefront technology is important to us. Here is an excerpt from a conversation I recently had with Lee in which he speaks candidly about "Wavefront LVC" and the ways in which visiting Focus helped improve a dangerous professional life.

1. What made you look into LVC?

Three senses for a combat soldier are critical during an operation. They are: smell, hearing, and sight. Sight is one of the most important because it helps detect movement. I noticed my eyes were starting to deteriorate and realized something had to be done.

2. What type of research was done before making a decision to go ahead with LVC?

Most of the research conducted was through word of mouth, and then literature. The literature that I read, especially the FEC pamphlets, secured my decision to go with them. The Focus Eye Centre pamphlets made me feel more confident with the organization, thus lessening my worries that errors might occur.

3. In terms of your work environment, how has LVC changed it?

The work environment of a combat soldier ranges from all types of climates and terrains. Contact lenses or glasses impede the ability to fully focus on the operation because they have to be constantly cleaned and protected from damage.

4. When seeing others on duty wearing their glasses or contact lenses, how do you feel now that you have had LVC?

Today, looking at other people wearing glasses or contact lenses and the issues they have to deal with has solidified my decision that getting LVC as the right decision for me.

5. What has been your experience since having LVC?

After having LVC my sight has definitely improved, bringing my confidence to a new level, especially at work.

6. How would you rate your experience at FEC?

The experience I had at FEC was excellent. Focus ensured that my concerns were their concerns. Any questions that I asked were answered directly, which alleviated my doubts regarding LVC.

7. How was your consult with Dr. Cheung?

One aspect that made me choose Focus Eye was dealing directly with the surgeon, Dr. Cheung. Being able to discuss the procedure in detail with him provided the security needed to make this decision, and to choose Focus Eye Centre as the place to have my surgery.

For more information about how Wavefront is changing the lives of soldiers in the field see: <http://focuseye.com/intraOD/video/shallhorn.wmv>

lier hockey bags on which the supplier used stitches that were 4mm long and 1.5mm wide. "It's such a little detail," explains Jason, but sitting on the shelf "the one with the nicer stitching is a quality bag, while the other looks like a knock-off."

"If the quality isn't there, customers will choose a Bauer or Nike [product]," he says. "With my glasses I don't think I would have picked up on it so easily."

Jason's recovery has been slower than his wife's, but when asked to sum up his feelings about his vision after surgery, his reply is as quick as a wrist shot: "It's definitely worth it."

The gift was such a good idea that, on the same day as his son and daughter-in-law were having their Wavefront LVC, Eldon and Sharon had their own procedures. After spending decades crisscrossing the continent as a long-haul truck driver, Eldon's vision was weakening (a state enhanced by the fact that he was "pretty much blind forever" in his left eye). His recovery was relatively easy; he was outside working in the yard the day after his procedure. His vision is still improving. As for his wife, Sharon, she is, "happier than a pig in a puddle" with her results, Eldon says.

After Jason and Andrea had undergone their own procedures they watched a television report about patients who were unhappy with their LVC experiences at other centres. "We decided that could *never* have been us," recalls Jason. "It wasn't our situation at all. When [Dr. Edmison] explained it, it made sense. The staff at Focus answered all our questions. They are very upfront."

So much so that Andrea has recommended Focus and Wavefront LVC to a handful of friends and "they've all had it done," she says.

But would she recommend Wavefront LVC to parents or grandparents looking as a gift idea?

Definitely. "Jason's parents tend to get us useful gifts and this is the most useful gift of all."



Picture perfect: the Birds without glasses

Irish Eyes Are Smiling

Nurse and entrepreneur Mary Wetscher had a Wavefront procedure. Life hasn't been the same since.

By Mark Thompson

Mary Wetscher's story is familiar even if her tone of voice is not.

The Ireland-born nurse and entrepreneur wore soft (bifocal) contact lenses and had to struggle to get them in during the morning rush and out after a long day at work.

"It was very uncomfortable," says Mary in a Guinness-thick brogue that belies the fact that she emigrated decades ago from County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland. "Plus," she adds, "contacts are expensive." Mary estimates the cost of contact lenses, solutions and cases was topping \$1,000 per year.

Then she heard an ad for Focus Eye Centre on the radio that piqued her curiosity. She followed up by asking her optometrist about laser vision correction. Her eye doc gave an independent medical perspective that got Mary excited about the prospect of life without lenses, so she made an appointment for a no-charge, no-obligation consultation at Focus Eye and took her son along for moral support.

"The staff at Focus was just wonderful," she recalls of a consultation that addressed poor distance vision in her right eye and poor reading vision in her left. Mary was relieved to find out that she was a candidate for laser vision correction and that a Wavefront PRK procedure would likely alleviate her vision woes.

"Dr. Edmison told me to go home and think about it," recalls Mary, "but I said, 'No I think I'll sign up [for surgery] right now.'" A quick but informed decision for a woman whose work demands nothing less than excellent eyesight.

In fact, Mary holds down two jobs that demand superior vision. As a pre-op nurse in the Day Surgery Department at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, she sees upwards of 60 patient charts a day and must be able to read the test results and other notes that are often recorded in micro-fine type.

"It's very important that I don't get a number wrong when I am reading lab results, for instance," explains Mary

Patients who come through the Queensway Carleton hear the same refrain when they struggle to find their glasses or put in contact

lenses: "Why don't you go to Focus Eye Centre and see if they can help you out?" Mary asks.

The staff at Focus is "just wonderful," she insists. "Total quality patient care is what they offer." High praise from a woman who knows her way around a medical environment and has a keen eye for client care.

After hours Mary runs a successful small business — a 10-year-old enterprise called WMW Culinary Personnel Services that provides servers to many posh social events in Ottawa, including those hosted by the Governor General, various embassies, and the Viennese Winter Ball black-tie event. So while she says it's wonderful these days to be able to get up and shower and put on my make-up without the hassle of contact lenses, "I [also] need to be able to read everything from menus and schedules to table numbers at a distance."

Mary is so pleased with her vision that, "When I see Dr. Edmison these days I tell him that I am so happy I could just cry."



Photo: Angela Reid

Mary Wetscher

As for life beyond business, Mary is a proud wife, mother and gardener who is as particular about her floors as her flowers. A self-admitted clean freak, when Mary sweeps the house she gets into every nook and cranny. These days, as a result of Wavefront laser vision correction, "I can see all the dust!"

The woman some patients call "Irish Mary" also has a passion for returning to the Emerald Isle whenever she can to visit family and spend time at her old homestead overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The difference is that these days, Mary travels in greater comfort and, when she finally touches down and takes that first stroll out her back door and casts a glance over the roiling sea, she sees the white caps on every single wave. **7**

PATIENT FEEDBACK



Dear Focus:

I just received your most recent newsletter, and after seeing the article about the Meech Lake Triathlon, it was important for me to send you a note regarding my experiences subsequent to my surgery last year.

My laser eye surgery was in July 2006. I have been so delighted ever since. I continue to discover things that I can do that I couldn't previously! Snorkeling in the Caribbean (BVI) last winter for instance was so exciting; I could see!

However, after starting to run this year, I decided that I would try a triathlon, so I signed up for a tri triathlon. I never would have been able to do this previously — the swimming portion would have been impossible. Swimming with goggles and contacts has never been something that worked well for me.

My training was done in pools and lakes and it was amazing that I could swim and see. I used to be so limited because I was extremely disoriented in the water due to my very limited vision. Imagine my delight when I was at a cottage this summer and swam out to an island 400m from shore and then back again. I could only do that because I could see where I was going!

The fact that I can dive in to the lake and not worry about glasses or losing contacts, etc., seems like a huge miracle to me.

My "Try a Tri" was on the long weekend in September and I achieved a number of PBs (personal bests — primarily finishing a triathlon!), but the sweetest success was being able to complete a triathlon and not have impaired vision! I will continue to do triathlons and I will, on a daily basis, continue to be grateful for my new eyes!!

Thank you yet again.
Nancy E Carter, CGA

'Eyelid surgery' specialist joins Focus

(OTTAWA) — Focus Eye Centre is pleased to announce it will be working with Dr. Kevin Smith to perform blepharoplasty procedures.



Dr. Smith

Patients wishing to undergo what is commonly known as "eyelid surgery" may recognize Dr. Smith's name: he is an ophthalmologist and cataract and oculoplastic surgeon who has long been providing exceptional eye care to patients in Ottawa and surrounding area via his private practice.

"Dr. Smith is a fine surgeon and a most welcome addition," says Focus Medical Director David Edmison. "He brings a wealth of experience and a commitment to superior surgical outcomes."

Dr. Smith is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (Canada) in Ophthalmology and is American Board Certified in Ophthalmology. A native of Montreal, he has been in private practice in Ottawa since 1992, averaging 500 cataract and 500 oculoplastic procedures each year.

Ask the Doctor

Q. I understand that Focus is now offering eyelid surgery. So what is blepharoplasty, and who is a good candidate?

A. Blepharoplasty rejuvenates puffy, sagging or tired-looking eyes by removing excess fat, skin and muscle from the upper and lower eyelids. It may be performed for cosmetic reasons or to improve sight by lifting droopy eyelids out of the patient's field of vision. Some people have eyelid surgery to correct problems that are a result of aging, while others have inherited traits that cause them to seek treatment as early as their 20s or 30s. As with any elective procedure, patients must have reasonable expectations and be well-informed before they make any decisions.

Blepharoplasty will not remove crow's feet or other wrinkles, eliminate dark circles under your eyes, or lift sagging eyebrows. It can, however, add an upper eyelid crease to tightly-lidded eyes and can be done alone or in conjunction with other facial surgery procedures such as a facelift or brow-lift. Blepharoplasty takes between 45 minutes and a few hours depending on the extent of the surgery being performed, and is usually performed under local anesthesia (which numbs the area around your eyes) along with oral or intravenous sedatives. You'll be awake during the surgery, but relaxed and insensitive to pain. ■

Everest Climbing

(OTTAWA) — The Focus affiliated Everest SurgiCentre is experiencing healthy growth after just a few weeks of operation.

"The Centre has been very well received and we are seeing a steady volume of patients," confirms Francine DesRosiers, RN, Clinical Manager of Everest SurgiCentre. "There is a substantial demand for clear lens exchange (CLE)," she adds.

"It makes a huge difference in terms of patient confidence to know that we employ an anesthetist for every procedure and that there is always an experienced operating room nurse," adds DesRosiers. Everest also boasts a dedicated uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system and the latest surgical technology.

Everest serves a subset of patients who, largely due to higher refractive errors, fall outside the parameters for typical laser vision correction but may benefit from clear lens exchange. For more information: info@everestsc.com. ■



Opening day at Everest SurgiCentre: (from left to right) Therese Gagnon, nurse; Francine DesRosiers, Clinical Manager; Dr. David Edmison, Medical Director; Robert Hickson, Alcon representative; Dr. Rodolfo Borromeo, anesthetist; Courtney Moodie, nurse.

NEWS HEADLINES

Is Laser Eye Surgery Safer Than Wearing Contact Lenses?

(PORTLAND, Ore.) — After comparing data from several recent studies, an Oregon ophthalmology professor has concluded that laser eye surgery may be safer than wearing contact lenses long-term.

The chance of vision loss appears more likely with long-term contact lens wear than with laser eye surgery, said William Mathers, M.D., of Oregon Health & Science University Casey Eye Institute in Portland, Ore.

"Several times a year, I have patients who lose eyes from complications because they've been wearing contacts and they've gotten an infection. By this, I mean their eyes have to be physically removed from their bodies," Mathers said in a news release.



"It's not that contacts aren't good. They're better than they've ever been. But one cannot assume contacts are safer."

In contrast, Mathers said the safety record of 18,000 laser eye surgery procedures conducted at Portland's Casey Vision Correction Center demonstrates that no patient has ever lost vision equivalent to two lines on an eye chart. Mathers also cited results from more than 32,000 U.S. military personnel undergoing laser eye surgery in which one in 1,250 lost one line of vision. There were no reports of loss of two lines or more of vision.

Mathers said that between 20 million and 25 million U.S. citizens wear contact lenses. About one million people in the United States undergo laser eye surgery annually.

Source: *AllAboutVision.com*, October 2006 ■

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