

A NEW VIEW ON LIFE: MATT'S CORNEA TRANSPLANT JOURNEY

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Matt with his family

For Matt, a cornea transplant meant the difference between fading vision and a world brought back into focus. Matt’s journey began unexpectedly after a seemingly minor ear infection ruptured as he slept. As he wiped his pillowcase, discharge from his ruptured eardrum, mixed with dirt beneath his contact, led to a rare fungal infection, causing severe vision impairment.

After initial treatment from his primary ophthalmologist, Matt was referred to Dr. Kenneth Goins at the University of Kansas Health System. “I learned about Saving Sight and a little about what could happen, and we talked about possibly looking for a donor,” Matt said. Tests revealed the fungal infection in his eye was progressing rapidly, and Dr. Goins informed him he’d need a cornea transplant to preserve any hope of sight. “They were concerned I could lose 100% of my eyesight, and I needed a transplant ASAP,” Matt recalled.

Despite the challenges, he stayed focused on the possibility of regaining his sight.

Matt’s experience with transplants started years before his cornea surgery when he received a life-saving kidney transplant from a living donor. That experience helped shape his understanding of the power of eye, organ, and tissue donation, but it wasn’t until he faced potential blindness that he fully appreciated how vital even the smallest parts of the body can be.

“I didn’t know how much a single tissue could impact someone’s life until I was faced with losing my sight,” Matt said. “It’s incredible that two people have now given me this chance to live fully.”

For Matt, the cornea transplant stands as a reminder of the selflessness of donors and the profound difference their gifts make. Gratitude filled Matt’s heart as he spoke

of the donor who made this possible.

“I am forever grateful,” Matt said. “Someone selflessly gave me the gift of sight, and it’s overwhelming. What did I do to deserve such love and compassion?” The impact of his donor’s gift goes beyond Matt’s renewed vision—it’s a testament to human kindness and the power of eye, organ, and tissue donation. To those unfamiliar with the impact of donation, Matt has a simple message:

“You might be able to save someone’s life or change their world just by checking that box on your license,” Matt said. “It’s a chance to help someone in a way that goes far beyond what we can understand.”

As he continues to recover and adjust to his new vision, Matt hopes to honor his donor’s legacy by sharing his story and encouraging others to become registered donors.