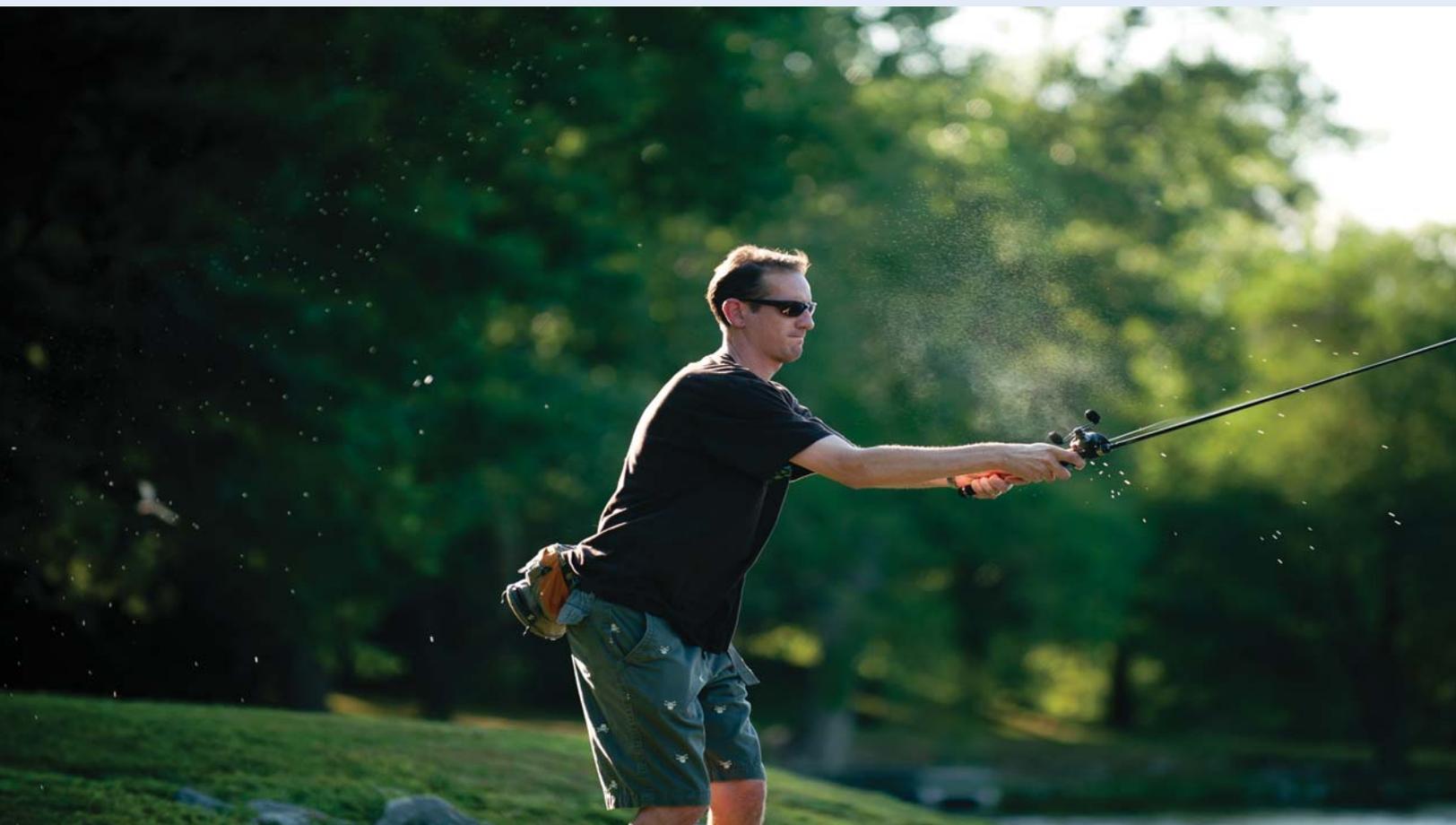


An organ donor helped Chris Meyer regain
his vision and his passion for fly-fishing.

THE GIFT OF SIGHT





Chris Meyer

by Annie Kuhl
Heartland Lions Eye Banks

Tying a fly for fishing can be difficult enough for someone with 20/20 vision. But for a person suffering from a blinding eye condition, the challenge can be nearly impossible.

For Chris Meyer, the deterioration of his eyesight was stealing away the joy of a sport he loved. For years, the Kansas City resident suffered from eye problems that left his vision compromised.

"Everything was a big haze," he explained. "I would see ghost images, like four or five visions of the same chair. There were a lot of halos, a lot of flares, rings around taillights. The haze filled up my whole vision, making it hard to do anything."

In his early 20s, Chris was diagnosed with kerataconus, a disorder that causes the cornea to become distorted. Chris was fitted with hard contacts to correct his eyesight, but as he grew older, the contacts became more cumbersome while his vision continued to deteriorate. Kerataconus affected his job in information technology, limited his ability to drive, and worst of all, affected his passion for fly-fishing.

In 2004, Chris underwent a cornea transplant on his left eye under the care of Dr. Joseph Tauber. Although the first three weeks of his recovery were highly uncomfortable, Chris now has 20/20 vision when he wears a soft contact lens.

"Everyone wonders – how do you do that? You actually got your eyeball cut open?" Chris said. "I think one of the reasons people don't get the cornea transplants they need is because it's a scary thought, but it's so worth it in the long run. There's nothing I wouldn't have done to get my vision back."

The first cornea transplant went so well that Chris underwent his second in 2009. "Although my vision's not back 100 percent, it's amazing I have 20/40 vision even without my contact in. I'm not there yet, but I'm better than I was."

While Chris has been blessed with better eyesight, the journey has been bittersweet. Because of his condition, Chris' donors had to be younger than he was and the corneas less than 72 hours old.

"It's such a double-edged sword. What's good for somebody like me meant something bad had to happen to someone else. The hardest thing is knowing what another family was going through," Chris said.

Today, thanks to the gift of his donor families, the talent of Dr. Tauber, and the support of Chris' optometrist, Dr. Jill Smith, Chris is back on the water and fishing.