JEI Welcomes First Glaucoma Fellow

Dr. Thomas Retires

Dr. Uwaydat Receives Martha Wood Bentley Chair
2015 has been an exciting and productive year for the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute.

We are pleased to announce the addition of four new faculty members: Dr. Tayyeba Ali, cornea and external diseases; Dr. Sunali Goyal, cornea and external diseases; and Dr. Ahmed Sallam, retina and uveitis; Dr. Anna Schlesselman, optometry; and our newest ophthalmology residents, Drs. Donald Gauldin, Joshua Hardin and Shawn Nash. We welcome these outstanding individuals to our eye care team.

Dr. Sami Uwaydat, associate professor, has been named the Martha Wood Bentley Chair in Ophthalmology. This is a high honor at the university and reflects the superb commitment, hard work and excellent performance in patient care, education and scholarly activity. The chair, in memory of Martha Wood Bentley, will allow Dr. Uwaydat to expand his commitment to academics and patient care.

The Ophthalmic Medical Technology Program celebrated its 15 year anniversary this fall. The program has graduated 13 classes since it began in August 2000. We are extremely proud of our two most recent graduates, Cayla Troyer and Sadrina Shaw as they begin their careers caring for patients with eye disease at UAMS.

This year, the Institute launched its very first fellowship. Under the leadership of Dr. Grant Morshedi, Dr. Michael Salter became our first glaucoma fellow. Dr. Salter is a recent graduate of our ophthalmology residency program and has distinguished himself as being in the top 18 of all residents in the United States. This program is a confirmation of our commitment to educating the next generation of health care providers.

October marked a year since the opening of the Jones Eye Institute’s newly renovated Optical Shop. By expanding and relocating, we have seen a record increase in the service we provide. The Optical Shop increased options to our patients to allow our patients the greatest range of options to meet their needs.

It has been a very good year for all of us at the Jones Eye Institute. With your support, we look forward to continued success as we pursue excellence in research, education and patient care.
Dr. Uwaydat receives Martha Wood Bentley Chair
JEI Welcomes First Glaucoma Fellow
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Dr. Uwaydat Honored with Martha Wood Bentley Chair in Ophthalmology

By Lee Hogan

Sami Uwaydat, M.D., an ophthalmologist at JEI, was invested October 30th in the Martha Wood Bentley Chair in Ophthalmology at UAMS. An endowed chair is the highest academic honor that can be bestowed by a university on its faculty.

Dr. Uwaydat is an associate professor in the Department of Ophthalmology in the UAMS College of Medicine. He joined UAMS in 2008 and serves as director of vitreoretinal service, medical director of the Leland and Betty Tollett Retinal and Ocular Genetics Clinic, and director of the Ocular Electrophysiology Lab.

“Dr. Uwaydat’s professionalism and knowledge in ophthalmology are second to none and this honor is greatly deserved,” said Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., JEI director. “We are grateful for his work on our team in the last several years and look forward to his continued brilliance.”

As an ophthalmology resident, Dr. Uwaydat repeatedly scored in the top 1 percent of all ophthalmology residents nationwide. He completed a vitreoretinal surgery fellowship at the University of Texas at Houston, and a medical retina fellowship at New York University.

“This chair has, and will continue to, foster medical advances,” said Dr. Uwaydat, “and I am honored to accept this distinction.”

Martha Wood Bentley of Fort Smith, who died in 2007, was a longtime supporter of JEI and served more than 10 years on its advisory board. During her lifetime and through her estate she gave UAMS nearly $1.7 million, with a portion of that used to create the chair in ophthalmology.

Dr. Uwaydat earned his bachelor’s degree in physics and his medical degree at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. He completed two residency programs, one in the Department of Surgery at American University and the second in ophthalmology at UAMS.

Dr. Uwaydat’s clinical interests include repair of retinal detachments, treatment of age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, diagnosis and treatment of retinal infections and inflammations, and diagnosis of inherited retinal diseases. He has served as an investigator on several national studies, including age-related eye diseases/macular degeneration, and has taken part in multiple investigator-initiated studies at JEI.
As Michael Salter, M.D., approached the end of his ophthalmology residency at UAMS on June 30, 2105, he struggled with which of his interests to pursue — pediatric ophthalmology or glaucoma.

He began applying for fellowships in pediatric ophthalmology on the East Coast but wasn’t entirely satisfied with his decision. In the end, his desire to help those with glaucoma — a disease that can affect any age but particularly the elderly — won out.

That’s when Grant Morshedi, M.D., a JEI glaucoma specialist, approached him about staying at UAMS for a glaucoma fellowship.

For Dr. Morshedi, it was an easy offer, calling Dr. Salter an intelligent doctor, gifted surgeon and a standout resident. It was an offer Dr. Salter, a Birmingham, Alabama, native, could not refuse. He began the fellowship, supported by the John W. Nutt Chair in Ophthalmology, July 1 as the first glaucoma fellow at JEI.

Being able to train under Dr. Morshedi for the yearlong fellowship was a major selling point.

“Dr. Morshedi knows so many surgical techniques that it is not possible to master all of them as a resident, so this allows me more time for him to teach me as a fellow,” Dr. Salter said.

He said he was drawn to the fellowship because of the challenge in treating glaucoma presents.

“If I am a comprehensive ophthalmologist and a complex glaucoma case comes to me, and I have not had this training, I am probably going to refer it, instead of managing it,” he said. “But with this training, I should be able to handle any case that comes through the door.”

Dr. Salter had already established a reputation for excellence before being selected for the fellowship. He was a chief resident and was the first-place winner of the Raymond and Mary Morris Research Award. He also attained the highest OKAP score, a knowledge test administered to ophthalmology residents, coming in the 98th-percentile in the nation.

Before coming to UAMS, Dr. Salter earned his bachelor’s degree in chemical and biological engineering at the University of Alabama and his medical degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine. He completed an internship in preliminary internal medicine at UAMS before becoming an ophthalmology resident.

As the nation’s population grows older, the prevalence of glaucoma will continue to rise, and the need for glaucoma-trained ophthalmologists is already outpacing the available pool of doctors.

“UAMS and the Jones Eye Institute recognized a need for more glaucoma-trained ophthalmologists in Arkansas.”
“UAMS and the Jones Eye Institute recognized a need for more glaucoma-trained ophthalmologists in Arkansas,” said Dr. Morshedi. “As an educational institution, we felt it was our obligation and duty to help.”

He said having Dr. Salter, a licensed ophthalmologist, would help the department expand its services and treat more patients than previously possible.

“Our students will benefit, as well, from his teaching ability,” said Dr. Morshedi. “In addition to being a good doctor, the best fellows are also good teachers.”

Through the first few months of his fellowship, Dr. Morshedi said Dr. Salter has continued to show the same excellence he did as a resident, which attracted Dr. Morshedi to offer him the fellowship.

“He’s continued to show his skills as a doctor, both with the patients and as a teacher,” said Dr. Morshedi. “This is a time for him to progress in his knowledge and skill set, and I expect him to continue to take full advantage of the opportunity.”
“It’s been rewarding to help train new doctors.”

Dr. Richard Harper Steps Down as Residency Program Director After 18 years; Dr. Paul Phillips Selected to Lead

By Lee Hogan
Richard A. Harper, M.D., a professor in the Department of Ophthalmology in the UAMS College of Medicine, said he never planned for a career as an educator.

After completing his ophthalmology residency at UAMS in 1989, it took him four years in private practice to realize he would be more fulfilled helping to train resident physicians. He returned to UAMS as an assistant professor in the Department of Ophthalmology in 1994.

In 1997, he became director of the residency program, guiding and supervising newly graduated doctors who are pursuing a career in ophthalmology. He relinquished the position in November and moved to the John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital to treat patients as a full-time clinician.

“It’s been rewarding to help train new doctors,” Dr. Harper said. “After 18 years, it’s time to let others guide the program.”

During his tenure as program director, Dr. Harper was president of the Arkansas Ophthalmological Society and the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology Program Directors Council. In 2011, he was awarded the Straatsma Award for excellence in resident education by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology, which is given to a program director dedicated to the principles and significance of residency education. He remains an associate board examiner for the American Board of Ophthalmology.

As a young assistant professor, Dr. Harper received career guidance from John Shock, M.D., a distinguished professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and founding director of the Jones Eye Institute, and Jeanne Heard, M.D., former UAMS provost and chief academic officer.

It was Dr. Shock who recognized Dr. Harper’s motivation to do more within the department and suggested a move to director of the residency program.

“This position is the most educationally focused in any department,” said Dr. Harper. “Your role is to oversee and implement the education mission of the department.”

Once he accepted the position, Dr. Heard, who was chairman of the UAMS Graduate Medical Education Committee, helped Dr. Harper become involved with its initiatives at UAMS and nationally. He served as chairman and vice chairman of the committee and chairman of various subcommittees.

Dr. Harper said he will miss a position he’s cherished for nearly two decades.

“It is a privilege to prepare this state’s future ophthalmologists, and this new role will allow me the OPPORTUNITY to delve deeper into that preparation.”
“There’s a sense of pride that comes from seeing the residents succeed in the program,” he said. “They go from being new clinicians to being experienced, capable graduates.”

At the VA, Dr. Harper will still be involved with the education of the students. “I’ll still interact with the residents and be able to teach them while working at the VA,” he said. “Thankfully, I won’t be giving up those relationships and the opportunity to teach.”

Paul H. Phillips, M.D., professor in the Department of Ophthalmology, succeeded Dr. Harper. Dr. Phillips came to UAMS in 1997, and since 2006, has served as chief of the Pediatric Ophthalmology Service at Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

He holds the Stella Boyle Smith/Gissur J. Petursson, M.D., Professor Chair in Ophthalmology. “It is a privilege to prepare this state’s future ophthalmologists, and this new role will allow me the opportunity to delve deeper into that preparation,” Dr. Phillips said.

Dr. Phillips completed his residency in ophthalmology at the University of Florida Eye Center. He completed a neuro-ophthalmology fellowship at the Emory University Eye Center and a pediatric ophthalmology fellowship at the Wilmer Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.
When A. Henry Thomas, M.D., first joined UAMS in 1971 as a medical resident, ophthalmology was simply a branch of the surgery clinic.

As of 2015, when Dr. Thomas’ 44-year career came to a close, that clinic has grown into the nine-story Jones Eye Institute building with its own faculty where 26,500 patients a year receive world-class care for any number of eye problems.

Dr. Thomas, 72, who retired Jan. 1 and was named professor emeritus, has seen major improvements in eye clinics and operating rooms, and advances in ophthalmic practice. He had expected to retire at a younger age, possibly in his 60s, but enjoyed medicine and was not ready to stop practicing.

While at JEI, Dr. Thomas’ specialties included strabismus, or misalignment of the eyes, and other eye muscle-related problems. Part of his practice extended to pediatric ophthalmology at the affiliated Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

During his career, Dr. Thomas adapted to changes in health care policy and political issues. He advises future doctors to keep a level head throughout their career despite the ever-changing environment of health care.

He is optimistic about young doctors and the future of the institute: “I expect great things for JEI, and I imagine the practice of ophthalmology will continue to advance,” Dr. Thomas said.

He credits his longevity in the field to the rewarding experience of helping others. Growing up in Little Rock, many of his friends are also his patients.

He will miss seeing patients when he retires but looks forward to spending time on the golf course. He is anxious to complete another goal of his — traveling to all 13 of the presidential libraries across the country. With only two presidential libraries left to visit, Dr. Thomas is well on his way.
The last year has brought marked improvements and new faces to the UAMS optical shop at JEI.

In the fall of 2014, the shop moved from its previous small space on the first floor of JEI to a new, spacious location across the hall.

For 20 years, the Stoney and Mary Beauchamp Optical Shop served UAMS patients well. Barbara Wright, a Master Optician, opened the shop in April 1995, planning, designing and equipping the facility.

She made the most of the small area, displaying between 400 and 500 frames from 10 to 15 different brands, for customers. She was joined three years ago by Joanie Kaut, a licensed optician.

The shop soon outgrew its space. “We were on top of each other,” said Nancy Rhea, a frequent patron who works at UAMS in Institutional Compliance. “You had to move around a lot when looking...
“It’s easier to see the selection,” she said. “It’s more spread out and easier to get to, as well.”

With the new shop and added supply has come new business. While the shop saw about 35 patients a day before the renovation, it now sees anywhere from 50 to 75 a day. Ms. Kaut said there has been an increase in new patients, including some who didn’t know the optical shop was around before the move.

Before, it was common for possible customers to walk by the shop without knowing it. Now, a premier spot on the first floor with a row of ceiling-to-floor windows makes the shop hard to miss.

Mrs. Wright served as the shop’s director until her retirement in July. She developed a loyal following of patients, including chancellors, deans, faculty, staff and people from all walks of life.

The shop has one new optician joining Ms. Kaut — Cristy Hawley who bring more than 30 years of experience. Ms. Hawley, who has been a licensed optician since 1994, began in the shop in August.

Ms. Rhea said the move has improved shopping, but another reason she keeps coming back is the knowledgeable, friendly staff.

“They are super helpful and professional and they’re good at suggesting frames that are good for you,” she said.
NEW PROVIDERS

Esteemed New Staff Sparks Enthusiasm throughout JEI

By Lee Hogan and Elizabeth Caldwell
Throughout its more than two-decade history, the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute (JEI) has worked to recruit the finest providers for patient care, research and education of the next generation of eye care professionals.

JEI is proud to have recently recruited four outstanding new health care providers — two cornea specialists, one retina specialist and one optometrist — who will continue the Institute’s legacy and reputation.

They are Tayyeba K. Ali, M.D.; Ahmed A. Sallam, M.D., Ph.D., FRCOphth; Sunali Goyal, M.D.; and Anna J. Schlesselman, O.D.

“Through illustrious careers in education, inquiry and patient care, each of our new providers strengthens our team at JEI,” said John Shock, M.D., founding director of JEI and a distinguished professor in the Department of Ophthalmology in the UAMS College of Medicine.

This new infusion of talent ensures JEI continues providing world-class health care. As a teaching institution, the exciting new faculty members also bring expertise to the classroom as they help train residents and educate students.
Tayyeba K. Ali, M.D.

Dr. Ali, an assistant professor and ophthalmologist, specializes in cornea, external disease, cataract and refractive surgery and uveitis. She comes to UAMS from the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in Miami, ranked the top ophthalmology school in the country for 12 consecutive years by *U.S. News & World Report*. There she completed two fellowships in cornea/external disease and uveitis.

“My time at Bascom Palmer allowed me the opportunity to work with the world leaders in ophthalmology and also to see rare diseases and unique, innovative methods of treating them,” said Dr. Ali. “Now I have the skills and tools necessary to help Arkansans.”

Dr. Ali is not new to UAMS, having completed her ophthalmology residency here as well as an internship in internal medicine. During her residency, she received the Raymond and Mary Morris Ophthalmology Research Award in 2010, given each year to the top three researchers as judged by faculty, residents and a visiting professor. She received the Academic Achievement Award in 2011, given to the student participating in research who also had the best scores during residency.

As a resident, she also was selected for the prestigious honor of presenting and received second place at the Table Rock Roundup, an annual meeting of state ophthalmological societies from Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

“I’m excited to return to Arkansas and become a part of the best eye care team in the state,” she said. “The prospect of staying involved in academics and teaching, while conducting research and providing care makes me excited about the work being done and also the future of JEI.”

She earned her medical degree from the Emory University School of Medicine, which was recognized by *U.S. News* as a top 50 medical school for research (No. 23) and primary care (No. 42). She has delivered dozens of lectures and published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Ahmed A. Sallam, M.D., Ph.D., FRCOphth

Dr. Sallam, an assistant professor and ophthalmologist, is the first ocular inflammation specialist in Arkansas and the first physician in the state to have specialty training in uveitis, a form of eye inflammation that can lead to permanent vision loss.

“I am thrilled to be taking this position at UAMS and I am happy for the opportunity to bring the ocular inflammation
management service to Arkansas,” said Dr. Sallam. “I was attracted to JEI because it is highly regarded for clinical care and research.”

He completed two fellowships in uveitis at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. Moorfields Hospital, regarded as one of the United Kingdom’s finest eye treatment centers, is the largest eye hospital in Britain and one of the largest in the world.

Dr. Sallam also specializes in the treatment of vitreoretinal disorders including retinal detachment, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy and has undertaken fellowships in vitreoretinal surgery in the United Kingdom.

He is board certified in ophthalmology from the U.K. Royal College of Ophthalmologists and has held a prior consultant appointment at the Ophthalmology Department, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust in the U.K. His expertise led to his being made a Fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (FRCOphth).

Dr. Sallam is an active researcher and has authored more than 45 publications and book chapters in the fields of uveitis and retinal surgery. He has been involved in many international studies investigating novel agents for the treatment of ocular inflammation and retinal diseases.

Dr. Sallam is passionate about teaching. “One of the many exciting opportunities here is to work with residents and students each day.”

Sunali Goyal, M.D.

Dr. Goyal, an assistant professor and ophthalmologist, specializes in cornea-external diseases and refractive surgery.

She is the only ophthalmologist in Arkansas to treat corneal disease with the Boston Keratoprosthesis, the most widely used artificial cornea in the world. It is used for patients with corneal disease who were not responsive to a corneal transplant.

Dr. Goyal is also experienced with the Descemet’s membrane endothelial keratoplasty procedure (DMEK), which is a partial thickness corneal transplant that replaces the innermost portion of the cornea. Standard corneal transplants replace the full thickness of the cornea, but the DMEK procedure tends to produce better visual results in a shorter period of time.

She completed her ophthalmology residency at JEI. During that time, Dr. Goyal won the Raymond and Mary Morris Award in 2011 and 2012. She also presented...
and won first place at the prestigious Table Rock Roundup two consecutive years.

She specialized in cornea-external diseases and refractive surgery at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary at Harvard Medical School in Boston, one of the most highly regarded ophthalmology programs in the country. It was recognized as the fourth-best hospital in the United States for ophthalmology by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2015.

While at Harvard, she also completed a two-year fellowship in corneal immunology at Schepens Eye Research Institute.

Dr. Goyal said she is excited to return to Arkansas, a place she calls home, and bring important ophthalmological services with her.

“I know Arkansas and what it needs in terms of ophthalmology. I knew my services would be of value,” said Dr. Goyal.

She has authored more than 25 publications and presented at various national and international ophthalmology conferences.

**Anna J. Schlesselman, O.D.**

Dr. Schlesselman, an instructor and optometrist, specializes in treating low vision.

She completed her Doctorate of Optometry and Master of Science in Vision Science, both from Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. She completed an optometry residency in primary care at the New Mexico Veterans Affairs Health Care System in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Most recently, she worked as an assistant professor at Southern College of Optometry in Memphis in the low vision and adult primary care clinics.

“JEI offers me an environment where I not only get to work with patients in the clinic, but get to help residents and students learn the art and science of eye care,” said Dr. Schlesselman.

She performs comprehensive eye exams, diabetic eye exams and low vision exams. She also treats eye conditions such as corneal abrasions, conjunctivitis (pink eye), corneal ulcers and dry eye syndrome.

The talented staff added to JEI will play an integral role in patient care and research, said JEI Director Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Ophthalmology in the UAMS College of Medicine.

“We are elated to recruit such accomplished, experienced providers to our team at JEI,” said Dr. Westfall. “Each one brings an increased level of talent and efficiency to our Institute.”

**Anna J. Schlesselman, O.D.**
For more than 20 years, Mike Tannehill had dealt with ocular hypertension, a condition in which high eye pressure can eventually lead to glaucoma.

The condition is not painful, and he kept it under control with various drops and oral medications. Whereas a healthy eye would register pressure in the teens or low 20s, it was nothing for him to have pressures in the upper 20s and low 30s.

That changed in January 2015 when the Mount Ida optometrist’s eye pressures soared into the 40s and 50s.

“I was suffering from an acute narrow-angle glaucoma attack and found out what pain was really like,” said Dr. Tannehill.

Dr. Tannehill said he first noticed that his vision became foggy, which indicated his pressures were elevated, but then came the pain.

“It was debilitating,” he said. “Once the pressure is up, that pain is unique and it’s in the eye and around it. You just want to curl up in a ball.”
Dr. Tannehill visited his ophthalmologist in Hot Springs, who referred him to Grant Morshedi, M.D., a glaucoma specialist at JEI.

Despite Dr. Tannehill’s high pressures, Dr. Morshedi said he was fortunate because he had not yet developed significant optic nerve damage. He tried various treatments for Dr. Tannehill, including more medication and eye drops.

Dr. Tannehill underwent a laser iridotomy in both eyes, in which a beam of light is used to create a hole on the outer edge of the iris, and a laser iridoplasty in one eye, in which a low-energy laser is used to widen the anterior chamber angle. However, neither procedure kept Dr. Tannehill’s eye pressures from spiking.

That’s when Dr. Morshedi approached his patient with the option of a cataract extraction to open his drainage angles, combined with gonioscopy-assisted transluminal trabeculotomy (GATT). GATT is an innovative, minimally invasive technique that has begun to catch on in glaucoma treatment.

“He went from high pressures and a significant impact on his ability to function, especially considering his occupation, to hopefully a situation where this isn’t going to be an issue for him anymore,” Dr. Morshedi said. “Another benefit is that he no longer needs to wear prescription glasses.”

Dr. Tannehill had the procedure done on his right eye June 9, 2015, and his left eye two weeks later. Just a few weeks after the surgeries, his vision was 20/20 in his right eye and 20/30 in his left.

“With almost every other type of glaucoma surgery a week or two out, patients have blurred vision, discomfort or pain, and limitations,” said Dr. Morshedi. “That’s the power to this procedure. He was back up and running.”

Dr. Tannehill was able to reduce his medications to one set of eye drops each day. Dr. Morshedi said there’s a chance he could be able to stop that as well.

“I am extremely happy with one set of drops a day, and if I can get off that also, I’d be dancing in the streets,” said Dr. Tannehill.

It’s all a bit surreal for Dr. Tannehill.

“I wasn’t expecting to be able to see as well as I do for distance,” he said. “I’m ecstatic with what I’ve achieved so far. I’ve had a better outcome than I could have imagined.”

He is grateful for the care Dr. Morshedi provided.

“Dr. Morshedi is outstanding,” he said. “Being in the eye field, I’ve had several experiences with ophthalmologists and I’m more impressed with him than any before; the way he communicated and kept me informed and at ease with the procedure.”

Dr. Tannehill wants his positive outcome to give other glaucoma patients hope.

“If I can give someone just a little hope,” he said, “that’s all I can ask for.”

“I’ve had a better outcome than I could have imagined.”
JEI Advisory Board Welcomes Two New Members

The Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute Advisory Board welcomed new members, Diane Jonsson and Fern Cross, at its annual dinner May 19.

Diane Jonsson, a Lincoln, Nebraska, native, worked as a manager and buyer for Neiman Marcus, and also worked for Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills and Palm Beach, Florida. She is married to Phillip R. Jonsson, a noted philanthropist and entrepreneur. She is also a member of advisory boards of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging.

Fern Cross was a nurse for more than 20 years in Arkansas. She was married to J.B. Cross, M.D., an ophthalmologist in Little Rock and JEI Advisory Board member, until his recent death. She is also a member of the UAMS College of Nursing advisory board.

At the Spring JEI Advisory Board meeting and Annual Reception, the board heard presentations from John Shock, M.D., Romona Davis, M.D., and Christopher Westfall, M.D. Dr. Shock was presented a framed photo depicting his recent induction into the Arkansas Military Hall of Fame.

The JEI Advisory Board has a rich history. In 1987, an advisory committee was established by distinguished volunteers to help raise funds to support a basic research program in the Department of Ophthalmology in the UAMS College of Medicine.

By 1989 the committee had helped to raise $3.5 million for research, not including a generous gift of $5.5 million from Bernice Jones of Springdale to build an eye institute to be named the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute.

By 1990, the committee became the Jones Eye Institute Advisory Board. The first president was John Nutt who served a five-year term. The Advisory Board has been instrumental in the growth and elevation of JEI, which is now a nine-story, 100,000-square-foot, free-standing facility.
Over the years, 75-year-old Ida Davis learned to deal with her poor vision. She encountered most of her issues around the house, while watching television or reading the newspaper. Due to her blurred vision, she was not able to see the paper’s fine print or see the score of the ballgame on the television screen. She put off seeing an ophthalmologist until it got to the point she knew something was wrong.

She was finally convinced to see a doctor when her blurred vision began causing her difficulty when driving, especially at night. The glare from oncoming headlights made it hard for her to see clearly behind the wheel.

“I was afraid,” said Ida Davis. “I thought I might go blind or have to give up driving.”

When surgery was discussed, Ida Davis was apprehensive and unsure she wanted to move forward. She was frightened that the procedure could make her vision worse.

One talk with Dr. Davis and things changed.

“She talked me through each and every step,” said Ida Davis. “She assured me it was going to be okay, and I was going to be able to see better and be able to drive after the procedures. It was just phenomenal.”

Ida Davis said it was not just her new doctor who impressed her, but the entire team at JEI.

“When I saw her, she had significant cataract issues,” said Dr. Davis. “Over the years as the cataracts progressed, she was prescribed new glasses, but that was no longer a sustainable option.”

When surgery was discussed, Ida Davis was apprehensive and unsure she wanted to move forward. She was frightened that the procedure could make her vision worse.

One talk with Dr. Davis and things changed.

“She talked me through each and every step,” said Ida Davis. “She assured me it was going to be okay, and I was going to be able to see better and be able to drive after the procedures. It was just phenomenal.”

Ida Davis said it was not just her new doctor who impressed her, but the entire team at JEI.
“Everyone was nothing but great,” she said. “Even the nurses would tell me what was going on during the procedures and it just eased my mind of the fear.”

Following surgery there was a marked improvement in her vision.

“She had an uncomplicated procedure in each eye,” said Dr. Davis. “Now, she has 20/25 vision in her right eye and 20/20 vision in her left eye.”

Gone are the days when Ida Davis has to walk up to her television to see print on the screen, or hold a newspaper inches from her face to see the text.

“Now, I can sit back like a normal person would be able to,” she said. “I don’t have to always have my glasses at my side, either. Before, if I left my glasses at home, that was a big deal. Now, it’s not.”

Ida Davis said she would encourage anyone with vision issues to visit JEI and Dr. Davis.

“I would recommend her to anyone with problems, go to her,” she said. “She will make you at ease and solve the problem.”
Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., Named Surgery Service Line Director

Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., in addition to his duties as director of the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, has been named director of the surgical specialties service line for UAMS Medical Center.

The organizational change took effect July 1 and features 15 service lines. These include emergency medicine, imaging, pharmacy, nursing, neurosciences and myeloma, among others.

A service line is focused on a specific patient need, in this case surgery, and provides an organizational structure that enables physicians and staff to work as a team. The structure facilitates the partnership with patients and families and is designed to allow for the provision of quality care in an efficient manner.

“Our patients should see a more seamless transition between office visits and hospital stays as well as more coordinated follow-up care and more efficient transition to referring physicians and other services, said Dr. Westfall. “I am excited to lead UAMS’ surgery service line for the benefit of our patients and their families.”

JEI Works Toward Bio-Repository Research Lab

Planning has begun for a bio-repository lab at JEI to hold specimens from patients with genetic diseases for research purposes. The repository will be part of the Leland and Betty Tollett Retinal and Ocular Genetics Center at JEI.

“More than 1,800 genetic syndromes are associated with eye disorders and the most effective way to combat these is through research,” said Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., JEI director. “This bio-repository lab will help us to establish the foundation for future research.”

When the Tollett Genetics Center opened in 2011 on the eighth floor of JEI, a section of the facility was dedicated to genetic research and the future storage of specimens. The planning phase has begun for the collection, storage and cataloguing of specimens as a part of this important project.

John P. Shock, M.D., Ophthalmic Medical Technology Scholarship

The support from faculty, staff and graduates led to the establishment of the John Shock, M.D., Ophthalmic Medical Technology Scholarship in June 2010 to honor Dr. Shock and his vision for establishing this program in Arkansas. This scholarship was fully endowed in 2011, and since 2012 has provided financial assistance to senior students in the OMT program.

Cayla Troyer in 2014 became the third recipient of the $1,500 John P. Shock OMT Scholarship. Ms. Troyer, who also was Student Council president of the College of Health Professions, graduated from the OMT program in May.

This year, for the first time, there was enough funding to award two scholarships. Anderson Brock and Lauren Pipkin, both seniors, each received $1,500 toward the tuition and fees for the 2015-16 school year.
Resident & Alumni Day - June 5, 2015

(from left to right) Terry Chacko, Marti Thomas, A. Henry Thomas, M.D.

(from left to right) Karen Call, Kristopher R. Watson, Celina C. Watson, O.D., John Pemberton, D.O., M.B.A.

UAMS Department of Ophthalmology 2015

(from left to right) Kathy Fray, M.D., Gissur Peturrson, M.D., and Chris Fray

(from left to right) Nalini Bora, Ph.D., James Fleming, M.D., Puran Bora, Ph.D.
Shawn Nash, D.O.

Dr. Shawn Nash received his medical degree from Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific in May 2014 and completed his postgraduate transitional year at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance.

His achievements include: Dean’s List throughout medical school, Sigma Sigma Phi Osteopathic National Honor Society; The President’s Award, The Joseph Weiss Memorial Scholarship Award, The East West Scholarship for Academic Achievement, and The Robert E. Corey Memorial Scholarship recipient for community service.

Some of his public service activities include: MediCorps volunteer in Siem Reap, Cambodia; Pipeline for Health Careers for low-income high school students; and Montclair Free Medical Clinic volunteer in Montclair, California.

Joshua Hardin, M.D.

Dr. Joshua Hardin received his medical degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch School of Medicine in May 2014. He went on to completed a postgraduate year of training in Internal Medicine at UAMS, finishing June 2015.


Donald Gauldin, M.D.

Dr. Wright received his medical degree from the Medical University of South Carolina in May 2013 and completed his first year of internal medicine there in June 2014.

His achievements include: Highly Distinguished Category for Academic Performance; South Carolina Life Scholarship; E. Chandler Owens Memorial Scholarship; and ACR REF/Abbott Medical Student Clinical Preceptorship Research Grant in Pediatric Rheumatology.

Some of his public service activities include: Cares Clinic volunteer in Charleston, South Carolina; Crisis Ministries volunteer in Charleston; Harvest Free Medical Clinic volunteer in North Charleston, South Carolina; group mentor to first-year MUSC medical students, 2010-2011; third-year class representative for MUSC Emergency Medicine Interest Group 2011-2012; and teacher for ethics and patient interviewing class to first year MUSC physician assistant students.
The Ophthalmic Medical Technology (OMT) Program at JEI celebrated its 15th anniversary this fall. The program enrolled its first students in August 2000 and is a collaboration of the UAMS College of Health Professions and JEI.

Students admitted to the 24-month program complete two fall, two spring and two summer semesters. Students participate in approximately 1,900 hours of clinical training in direct patient care at JEI, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, and several private ophthalmology offices in Arkansas.

Students are trained to assist the ophthalmologist in most aspects of a patient’s eye care. Upon completion of the program they earn a Bachelor of Science in Ophthalmic Medical Technology and are eligible to take the national certification test to earn the highest level of certification administered by the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology.

To date, the program has graduated 13 classes for a total of 49 graduates. Most alumni continue to work in eye clinics in the central Arkansas area, and 31 have completed all steps to earn the national COMT credential. Job opportunities are excellent and continue to increase. The program continues to seek qualified applicants for each academic year. For more information on the program or how to apply, call (501) 686-5150 or visit http://healthprofessions.uams.edu/programs/ophthalmicmedicaltechnology/.