

# The Georgia Society of Ophthalmology **Eye Openers**

## Spring 2017

Editors D. Brian Kim, MD  
& W. Barry Lee, MD

## GSO Goes To Washington

### Contents

- [GSO Goes to D.C.](#)
- [Spotlight: Jill Thornton of Prevent Blindness Georgia](#)
- [GSO Annual Meeting](#)
- [2017 Legislative Battle](#)
- [Humanitarian Work in the Dominican Republic](#)
- [Member News](#)
- [New Members](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)

Maria Aaron, MD  
Nick Anand, MD  
Zach Balest, MD  
Himanshu Banda, MD  
David Bogorad, MD  
S. William Clark, MD  
Scott Cole, MD  
Bret Crumpton, DO  
John Godard, MD

David Hemmings, MD  
Jeremy Jones, MD  
Anna Kao, MD  
Jennifer Kim, MD  
Danlin Mao, MD  
William Marks, MD  
Morgan Micheletti, MD  
Timothy Olsen, MD  
Purnima Patel, MD  
Heather Weissman, MD



This April, GSO had 18 members representing our organization in the nation's capitol during AAO's 2017 Mid-Year Forum. Face-to-face in powerful ways to affect policy, and the following members shared with congressional lawmakers what matters to Georgia's ophthalmologists, c

This advocacy trip focused on federal issues including (but not limited to): prescription drug pricing, funding for the National Institutes Department of Defense Peer Reviewed Vision Research program, and relief for physicians from onerous Medicare quality reporting require the successful **TECS** program being pioneered by the Atlanta VA Eye Clinic.

In addition to meeting with members of the Georgia delegation, including **Senator Johnny Isakson** (last photo) and **Representative Budd** Year Forum, GSO leaders accepted the **AAO 2017 Platinum Participation Award** and received recognition from **AAO President Cynthia A. Secretary for State Affairs Kurt Heitman, MD**. Each year, 2 societies are selected by the Academy's Secretariat for State Affairs for recogn Ambassador Program. In 2017, the Georgia Society of Ophthalmology and the Minnesota Academy of Ophthalmology received the Platinum f

## Society Leadership

### President

D. Brian Kim, MD

### President-Elect

W. Barry Lee, MD

### Vice President

Jeff Payne, MD

### Secretary/Treasurer

James Brooks, Jr., MD

### Immediate Past-President

McGregor Lott, MD

### Councilor to AAO

S. Anna Kao, MD

### Executive Director

Lasa Joiner

### Councilors

#### Class of 2017

Elizabeth Crandall, MD  
Bret Crumpton, DO  
Michael Jacobs, MD  
Michael Magbalon, MD  
Tassos Costarides, MD, PhD



## Spotlight: Jill Thornton, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Georgia



Atlanta-native Jill Thornton has worked with non-profit organizations for more than 25 years, and she's thoroughly enjoyed every minute. /

### Class of 2018

G. Baker Hubbard, MD  
Jeremy Jones, MD  
William Marks, Jr., MD  
Randall Ozment, MD  
Emory Patterson, MD

### Class of 2019

Amy Estes, MD  
Nadeem Fattah, MD  
David Hemmings, MD  
Tushar Suthar, MD  
Margaret Wong, MD

### Legislative Chair

Malcolm S. Moore, Jr., MD

### PAC Chair

Jeffrey A. Carlisle, MD

*Foundation Georgia*, Jill took the wheel at Prevent Blindness because she loves a challenge and in her words, "when you believe in something

### A Novel Approach

The goal of PBG is to prevent blindness in all Georgians, and the organization tackles this problem with a three-pronged approach that addresses Georgia programs covering people from the very young to the very old, and that's what makes us exciting," says Jill.

The **Star Pupils** program provides high-quality vision screenings for three, four, and five-year olds. "Young children don't know that something's wrong, it's their right eye." So Prevent Blindness sends experienced screeners into pre-schools all over the state to screen for common sight problems like amblyopia and astigmatism. Because of the very high level of experience of the professionals that Prevent Blindness uses to perform these screenings, they catch problems. Approximately 8% of children fail to pass these screenings, whereupon Prevent Blindness Georgia refers them to providers who are willing to work with them through their eyes. We try to get to them as early as possible," says Jill.

Through its **Vision Outreach** program, Prevent Blindness Georgia provides quality, comprehensive, free eye exams for adults who are indigent, low-income, comprehensive exams, patients exhibiting signs of eye disease—such as cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, or macular degeneration—they are referred to 11% of adults screened through Vision Outreach need follow-up care for eye disease, and 96% need prescriptive eye glasses.

The third program run by Prevent Blindness is called the **Georgia Retinal Imaging Project (or GRIP,)** and focuses on screening the elderly for a state-of-the-art telehealth and retinal imaging technology to transmit data off-site to volunteer ophthalmologists—so these initial screenings are performed in the doctor's office.

I ask Jill about her favorite aspect of Prevent Blindness Georgia. "I love to see the fundraising and see how people respond about how they've benefited from the program. I love when I hear the stories...like the mom who tells me about how her child put on their new glasses and said, 'Look Mommy, there are leaves on the trees!' Or stories of adults who were previously unable to work, but after being correctly diagnosed and treated can read their prescriptions, read to their children, they can be part of society." Jill can particularly relate to the newly diagnosed young people: growing up as a child with an undiagnosed eye condition, she thought her brothers were cheating when they played the ever popular road-trip "billboard game."

### Opportunity to Give Back

Prevent Blindness Georgia always needs volunteers: doctors who are willing to provide pro-bono services to whom they can refer adult patients, as well as those who are able and willing to treat young children. Interested GSO members can contact Laurie Irby, VP of Children's Programs at (404) 266-1548 [lrby@pbga.org](mailto:lrby@pbga.org) and DeAndria Nichols, VP of Adult Programs, at (404) 266-2895 [dnichols@pbga.org](mailto:dnichols@pbga.org).



### Volunteer Opportunity This Month!

Prevent Blindness is hosting a Vision Clinic in Moultrie, Georgia on May 20th. Prevent Blindness Georgia will partner with Remote Area Medical (RAM) for this event and is looking for: ophthalmologists, optometrists, opticians, technicians, nurses and general volunteer support. The clinic will provide 300+ free eye exams and eye glasses to individuals without insurance. [Click here to register as a volunteer.](#) Call 404-889-3893 with any questions.

### Save the Date: PBG's Night For Sight on Friday November 3, 2017

This annual benefit will feature a presentation of the **Scott Pastor Person of Vision Award**, which was created in the memory of late GSO member Scott Pastor who has not only had the vision to create a better community but the fortitude to realize that vision—resulting in an invaluable impact on the community. The Vision Award is given to GSO member Dr. Tom Harbin. The Night for Sight will also feature a performance by *The Macular Degenerates*, "The world's only known to be musically acclaimed patients."

## Upcoming Events

### Prevent Blindness Vision Clinic

May 20, 2017  
Mulkey-Ndawula Event Center  
Moultrie, Georgia

### 2017 GSO Annual Meeting

August 4-6, 2017  
The Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island

### Night For Sight: Benefitting Prevent Blindness Georgia

November 3, 2017  
Piedmont Driving Club

## GSO 2017 Annual Meeting: Register & Reserve Your Room



### August 4-6 at the Ritz-Carlton

Join GSO this summer and have a luxury hotel experience at a top-ranked, five-star hotel where rooms normally go for over \$400/night. Meeting & reserve your room today so you and your family can enjoy first class accommodations at the GSO rate.

**There are a limited number of discounted rooms. Reserve your room today!**

[Click here to register for the meeting](#)

[Click here to make your reservation](#)

## GSONline

GSO's official professional recruitment board is a digital forum where members can post listings about opportunities in their practices: staff openings, available equipment, changes of address, etc.

### Interested?

## 2017 Legislative Battle: OD Injection Legislation

The issue of expanding optometrists' scope of practice to include performing injections into Georgia's eyelids developed into a Byzantine battle of political maneuvering on the final day of the session. Here is a timeline breakdown of the major events, bills, and key players.

### January 11

The first bill, **HB 36**, sponsored by Rep. Earl Ehrhart and Rep. John Meadows, is introduced.

The broad language in **HB 36** would have allowed optometrists to perform a variety of extraocular injections, and would have expanded the therapeutic use of a pharmaceutical agent "related to" diseases or conditions of the eye and adnexa.

### January 24

[Click here to fill out a short online form and place your ad today.](#)

[Click here to view the current listings.](#)



## Legal Defense Fund

The LDF is a rainy day fund dedicated to defending the practice of ophthalmology wherever legal issues arise: in the courts, state agencies, or in the legislative branch.

[Contribute to the LDF today](#) and show your support for the future of ophthalmology.

A group of 30 optometrists arrive *en masse* at the Capitol building to lobby the members of the House Health & Human Services Committee.

### February 7

The House Health Committee, chaired by Rep. Sharon Cooper, [holds a two-and-a-half-hour hearing for HB 36; including extensive testimony from GSO le](#); HB 36 fails 14 to 12.

### February 18

The second bill is introduced, [HB 416](#), once again sponsored by Rep. Ehrhart and Rep. Meadows. *Otherwise identical to HB 36, HB 416 adds a provision requiring either the completion of or enrollment in a 30-hour certification course.*

### February 21

HB 416 is assigned to House Health, the same committee where HB 36 met its demise.

### February 22

A 3<sup>rd</sup> OD injection bill is introduced in the Senate: [SB 221](#), sponsored by Sen. Renee Unterman.

### February 23

Sen. Unterman gives SB 221 an *extremely abbreviated* hearing in the Senate Health Committee, after two hours' notice on the committee agenda and on testify against the bill. SB 221 passes the committee, moves to the full Senate.

### February 24

HB 416 fails to pass the House Health Committee.

### March 3

Following a [misleading presentation from sponsor Sen. Unterman](#), SB 221 receives a vote on the Senate floor and passes 34 to 17.

### March 6

Now in the opposite chamber, SB 221 is assigned to the House Health Committee (where HB 36 and HB 416 were previously thwarted.)

### March 14

After three separate OD injection bills have been stalled, first threat is heard that an existing Senate Bill assigned to a different committee will be gutted :

### March 20

*In one day:* Language from SB 221 is inserted into [SB 153](#), a bill originally about hearing aids and sponsored by Sen. Matt Brass; [SB 153 is presented to Reps. Ehrhart and Meadows](#), and after only one hour of testimony SB 153 passes a committee vote.

**March 22:** [11 Alive airs news story on the "Zombie Bill"](#)

**March 24:** SB 153 goes to the House floor. Despite passionate and convincing [testimony from Rep. Betty Price, MD](#), it passes by a vote of 121 to 36.

### March 30, Sine Die

SB 153 is put before the Senate to make a final agree. Sen. Brass makes misleading statements while presenting the bill, saying certain amendments wer Association of Georgia.

At 11:45 pm on the final day of the session, SB 153 receives final passage by a vote of 30 to 21.

**Thank you to all GSO members who participated in the effort to stop this legislation.**

**To read our complete legislative summary for the 2017 session of the Georgia General Assembly, [click here](#).**



## GSO Foundation

The Georgia Society of Ophthalmology Foundation is a 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to support, promote, and develop projects and programs that raise awareness of and offer assistance to Georgians with ocular disease and conditions of the eye. The GSO Foundation funds projects that support underserved populations and address unmet needs related to eye health and access to care in Georgia.

**Interested in giving back to your community? [Click here to make a donation to the GSO Foundation.](#)**

## Humanitarian Work in the Dominican Republic

Drs. Brian Kim and Michael Jacobs spent a week last October traveling to the Dominican Republic as part of the [Surgeons for Sight](#) (SFS) team. Based in exempt 501(c)3 organization with a mission to help disadvantaged people, both locally and abroad, get the eye care they need to lead productive lives. Millin Budev of Charleston, SC, along with eight SFS staff members who assisted with patient screening, translation, OR preparation, and patient counseli



During the mission, forty-seven patients received cataract surgery at two separate facilities. While many GSO meml may perform this number on a single OR day, this was a considerable accomplishment under the circumstances: ext cataract density, negligible view through the microscope, no wheeled OR stretchers, nor a team of pre-op or PACU r familiar with the normal flow of a busy cataract day.

The patient population, while diverse, shared a commonality in their appreciation for the group's volunteer efforts. Pathology far exceeded that of our local communities, with most cataracts not amenable to phacoemulsification. Fortunately, Dr. "Magic Hands" Kim unleashed his unwieldy MSICS skill set, restoring sight to the truly blind from the "cataracts".

Several GSO members participate in humanitarian trips throughout the year, to places including Honduras, Africa, and the Caribbean. Please contact the office for information should you have interest in pursuing such an experience in the future.



## Member News

### Maria Aaron, MD, Named Secretary of AAO Annual Meeting

Emory Eye Center ophthalmologist and decade-long member of the GSO Maria Aaron, MD, has been selected as secretary for the American Academy of position is a three-year appointment based on AAO member voting. As secretary, Aaron will ensure that the Annual Meeting provides the best opportunity update their knowledge and skills. She also will be responsible for all the Academy programs, including ceremonial, educational, clinical and nonclinical

rewards of educating residents," Aaron says. "In my new role as associate dean, I'm responsible for the 104 residency programs and 1,271 residents and ways to attract multiple generations of ophthalmologists to the Annual Meeting so they can further their educa

---

### Reay H. Brown, MD to Deliver Innovator's Lecture at ASCRS

Dr. Brown is being honored with the Charles D. Kelman, MD Innovator's Lecture and Medal at the 2017 ASCRS \* ASOA Symposium & Congress in Los Angeles. "It is the highlight of my career," Dr. Brown says. He receives the award for his contributions to the field of glaucoma surgery, which have laid the foundation for options currently available.

---

### AAO Champion Dr. Drew Ferguson Sworn In to the U.S. House of Representative

Dr. Drew Ferguson is now officially a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for Georgia's 3rd district. With his dentistry background, and strong importance of having a voice from medical professionals in Congress.



GSO members Lawrence Brack, MD, S. Anna Kao, MD, and John Goddard, MD are pictured here presenting Dr. Ferguson with a PAC check from swearing-in celebration.

---

### We Want To Hear From You

If you are interested in contributing to the next edition of the newsletter (i.e. honors, awards, promotions, authorship, or other news of interest) simply send your submission (or submission idea) to: [sally@ga-eyemds.org](mailto:sally@ga-eyemds.org)

*Eye Openers* is GSO's members-only newsletter that focuses on current issues in ophthalmology, member news, association news and updates, legislative issues, practice management, and other subjects of interest to Georgia ophthalmologists.

The GSO does not necessarily endorse the opinions or statements contained in articles or editorials published in *Eye Openers*.

### Welcome New GSO Members

#### Namita Bhardwaj, MD

Southeast Permanente Medical Group

#### Victor Copeland, MD

Athens Retina Center

#### Aldo Espinoza, MD

MCG, Augusta University

#### Kevin Gertsch, MD

North Georgia Eye Clinic

#### Daniel Hwang, MD

Eye Consultants of Atlanta

#### Eric Jennings, MD

Georgia Ophthalmology Associates

#### Ghazala O'Keefe, MD

Emory Eye Center

#### Jordan Patton, MD

MCG, Augusta University

#### Derrick Pau, MD

Eye Consultants of Atlanta

#### Javier Servat, MD

Oculofacial Plastic Surgeons of Georgia

#### Kathryn Shmunes, MD

MCG, Augusta University

#### Heather Weissman, MD

Atlanta Ophthalmology Associates

This is a publication of the  
**Georgia Society of Ophthalmology**  
GSO Executive Office  
2700 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 570  
Atlanta, Georgia 30339  
(404) 299 6588  
[www.ga-eyemds.org](http://www.ga-eyemds.org)



