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NEWS

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*****Eye Bank Saves Sight.

NOTE TO EDITORS: March is National Eye Bank Month. If you are interested in doing a story on eye banking and/or advances in transplant surgery, please contact Harrell or Heck. Several transplant recipients, including two who have had double transplant procedures, are available for interview.

A mother trying to catch her five-year-old who is running into the street is hit by a car. Her face, shoulder and both eyes are badly injured: the perforated corneas are destroyed. Fortunately, blindness is not this woman's only option today. Because donated corneas are available, emergency surgery and a corneal transplant may salvage her sight.

This is just one example of how transplantation of human tissue has come into widespread use. Much of it would not be possible without the efforts of agencies such as the Lions Sight and Tissue Foundation, working jointly with the Skin Transplant Center for Burns at The University of Texas Health Science Health Center at Dallas.

"Coordinating the efforts of the two banks makes sense," says Ellen Heck, faculty associate in surgery and university coordinator for the foundation. "We felt that the community would benefit by having a donor program of this sort. For one thing, it's much more considerate of the family involved. This way only one person calls on the family during the time of grief--when we contact a member of the deceased's family to ask if we can explain our program and what it means to the living."

This cooperative effort is part of a growing trend nationally to coordinate organ and tissue donor programs at city, county or state levels. The Dallas bank, which has now expanded to include tissues such as bone and cartilage, also works closely with kidney and pancreas donors, as well as seeking marrow and joints for bone transplants. Founded in 1973 as an outgrowth of burn research, the skin program was joined in 1978 by the Texas Lions Eye Bank, which has been doing outstanding work in the area of cornea transplants for many years, says Ellen Heck.

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