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Boston University
Dear Member of the Media:

Former Tennessee beauty queen Liz Dear, nearly blind since a car accident took one eye and damaged and disfigured the other, can now read Time magazine, watch television and maneuver on her own, because of the help of a team of eye specialists at the University Hospital's Gundersen Eye Center. Her search to regain her vision would make a good feature story.

On August 5, 1988, Liz and her husband, Rick, were en route to Ohio when their car spun out of control and flipped over ten times, leaving Rick with minor injuries and Liz with a crushed face and broken teeth. Her left eye had been irreparably damaged and her right eye had been pierced by a piece of glass that totally detached the retina.

Louisville Hospital's trauma team saved her life, and an eye surgeon there saved her eye, but little of the vision remained.

The Dears spent the next 11 months searching for someone to help her see again. It wasn't until this July when Liz arrived at UH's Gundersen Center that she was given any hope. There a team consisting of an optometrist, an ophthalmologist, and a low-vision expert worked with her for four days.

The team fit Liz's scarred right eye with a contact lens that improved her visual acuity and allowed her to see well enough to maneuver more independently, and designed a pair of glasses for reading and another for watching television. "Our purpose was to maximize whatever very limited vision Liz had left," says optometrist Dr. Thomas Freddo, who coordinated the team of experts. Even her doctors were surprised that the visual aids were successful enough that Liz could read Time magazine in the waiting room.

To improve her eye cosmetically the team had a blue iris and a pupil painted on the contact lens that matches the prosthesis in her left eye and designed a pair of tinted glasses to mask any tiny discrepancies between the two eyes. The glasses will also protect the eye against ultraviolet light and the possibility of further accidental injury.

Says Liz: "The trauma doctors saved my life, but these people have restored the quality of that life." She now believes she can return to her job as a communications officer for the Indiana State Police.

If you are interested in doing a story, the Dears will be in Boston until September 16. Please call me or Sarah Downey at 617-638-8491.

Sincerely,

Patti Jacobs
Manager of Media Relations
The University Hospital