AEVR Celebrates its Vision Research Value Message on Capitol Hill

On February 25, AEVR concluded its year-long 20th anniversary celebration as “The Friends NEI” with a Capitol Hill reception that focused on its message about the value of federally funded vision research. Hosted by AEVR President Dr. Peter McDonnell with American Glaucoma Society (AGS) President Kuldev Singh, M.D. (Byers Eye Institute/Stanford University) and AGS member Janey Wiggs, M.D., Ph.D. (Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary), who was a featured speaker at the next day’s AEVR World Glaucoma Week Congressional Briefing (see story inside right).

Throughout the room, AEVR displayed poster-sized pages from its 20th anniversary brochure The Value of Federally Funded Vision Research—NEI which was released in October 2013 and delivered to all Congressional offices. Paul D’Addario, an Arlington, Virginia resident and Moran constituent, who was featured in the brochure, spoke with attendees about his implanted Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System, which enables him to identify objects after years of blindness. This Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved device, manufactured by Second Sight Medical Products, Inc., was the result of collaboration between the Department of Energy’s National Laboratories and its Artificial Retina Program and the NEI.

Dr. McDonnell acknowledged the three founding member organizations of AEVR and their attending representatives, which included Roy Chuck, M.D., Ph.D. (Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University) and Joel Schuman, M.D. (University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine), representing the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO), Cathy Cohen of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and Matt Windsor of ARVO. Earlier that day and under the auspices of NAEVR, Dr. Chuck visited offices of the New York delegation to advocate for increased NEI funding. Dr. Schuman participated in the AGS Advocacy Day.

Commenting on the event, AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky said, “It has been a great year of recognition of AEVR’s past accomplishments and an opportunity to look to the future, as AEVR’s Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative continues its sustained efforts to educate about how federally funded vision research is saving sight and restoring vision, thereby increasing productivity, maintaining independence, and improving the quality of life.”

In his comments (posted on AEVR’s Web site), Dr. Sieving “spoke about the promise of the primary NEI Audacious Goal of Regenerating Neurons and Neuronal Connections in the Eye and Visual System: “The goals are bold but achievable. They are beyond what medicine currently can do. We are planning for a 10-12-15 year effort to reach these endpoints. Success would transform life for millions of people with eye and vision diseases. It would have major implications for medicine of the future, for vision diseases, and even beyond this, for neurological diseases.”

AEVR wishes to thank the Departments of Ophthalmology and Colleges of Optometry which provided funding for the reception:

- Bascom Palmer Eye Institute/University of Miami School of Medicine
- Beckman Vision Center/University of California San Francisco School of Medicine
- Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine
- Casey Eye Institute/Oregon Health and Science University
- Dean McGee Eye Institute/University of Oklahoma College of Medicine
- Doheny Eye Institute
- Duke University Eye Center/Duke University School of Medicine
- The Eye Institute/Medical College of Wisconsin
- Flaim Eye Institute/University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
- Foundation Fighting Blindness
- Jules Stein Eye Institute/University of California Los Angeles School of Medicine
- W.K. Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan Medical School
- Kentucky Lions Eye Center/University of Louisville School of Medicine
- Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary/Scheepens Eye Research Institute
- Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University
- Scheie Eye Institute/University of Pennsylvania Health System
- Southern College of Optometry
- University of Southern California School of Medicine
- Vanderbilt Eye Institute/Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
- Washington University School of Medicine
- Wilmer Eye Institute/Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Earlier that day, Dr. Chuck met with Veronica Duron in the office of Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

Left to right: AEV’s David Epstein greets Cong. Howard Coble (R-NC) and Kirk Bell of his staff

Left to right: NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D. Ph.D., Paul D’Addario, and Cong. Jim Moran (D-VA). Mr. D’Addario, a Moran constituent, can now identify objects after years of blindness due to the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System, the development of which was funded in part by NEI.

Congressional Vision Caucus co-Chair Cong. Gene Green (D-TX), who provided a welcome, is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee with oversight jurisdiction of NIH

AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky (right) greets Cong. Richard Nolan (D-MN)

Left to right: AGS members Edward Sung, M.D. (University of Illinois at Chicago and Wheaton Eye Clinic) and John Fingert, M.D., Ph.D. (University of Iowa) visited Congressional offices the next day during the AGS Advocacy Day

AEVR President Dr. Peter McDonnell with American Glaucoma Society (AGS) President Kuldev Singh, M.D. (Byers Eye Institute/Stanford University) and AGS member Janey Wiggs, M.D., Ph.D. (Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary), who spoke the next day at AEVR’s World Glaucoma Week Congressional Briefing

Left to right: Michael Duenas, O.D. (American Optometric Association), Lester Marks (Lighthouse Guild), Roy Chuck, M.D., Ph.D. (Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University) and Mark Ackermann (Lighthouse Guild)

Left to right: AEVR members Edward Sung, M.D. (University of Illinois at Chicago and Wheaton Eye Clinic) and John Fingert, M.D., Ph.D. (University of Iowa) visited Congressional offices the next day during the AGS Advocacy Day