

A Bright Outlook

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Dawn Lam, MS, OD, FAAO, always tells her students that specialty contact lenses and prosthetics is an art as well as a science. In her role as full-time faculty and a clinician in the Stein Family

Cornea and Contact Lens Center at University Eye Center in Anaheim, she devotes herself to understanding her patients'

personal and family lives to better find solutions that fit their lifestyles. When she and her patient find the right fit, the right color match and the right vision solution, the reward is worth the time and effort.

“This is when I get a lot of hugs,” she says.

After completing her degree in Optometry from the Southern California College of Optometry, Dr. Lam went on to residency training in Cornea and Contact Lenses at the University of Houston, College of Optometry. She then returned to SCCO where she shadowed her mentor, Dr. Sunny Sanders, who saw a lot of prosthetics eye patients.

“She’s the one who started me on this track working with prosthetic eyes and prosthetic contact lenses,” Dr. Lam remembers. “When she left the university, I became the go-to person for these patients.”

The Right Touch



Dr. Lam developed the right touch in working with patients who may have had an eye injury or disease that either left a scar or injured the iris, causing glare. “Many feel socially isolated and self-conscious,” she says. “We’re here to help them so they not only feel more confident with the appearance of their eye but also that they experience improved vision.”

If anyone would know the negative social impact an eye injury can have, it would be Dr. Lam’s long-time patient, McKenna Case, 23.

McKenna was only 16 months old when she pulled down a Christmas stocking hook that severely injured her eye. Her parents rushed her to the emergency room. The surgeon on duty miraculously saved her eye. “They thought I was going to have a glass eye and be permanently blind in that eye forever,” she says.

Every year on the anniversary of that event – Dec. 17 – her mom and dad give her a big hug.

“It changed our lives forever,” McKenna says. “It made me a stronger person.”

Inspiration to Help Others

Growing up, children teased McKenna about her scarred eye. But the care she received gave her the confidence to grow up into the outgoing young woman she is today. While in elementary school, McKenna first came to SCCO for vision therapy and subsequently became Dr. Lam's contact lens patient.



“Dr. Lam has been the most incredible person to work with,” McKenna says. “She helped me increase my vision and also feel more confident about how my eye looks.”

After much trial and error, Dr. Lam and McKenna found the right cosmetic and vision solution with a soft contact lens painted to look like her other eye. It is such a great color match that most people don't notice the difference.

“Thanks to Dr. Lam I'm also able to see depth perception when before I would see a lot of double vision,” she says. “I was very nervous about getting my driver's license. I didn't know if I would pass the eye test and I did.”

This year, McKenna completed her master's in education and multiple-subject teaching credential. She currently is a Response to Intervention (RTI) teacher, working with homeless and high-risk elementary children. She feels blessed to be in a position where she can make a difference.

“I believe that the way that I was helped by my doctors growing up with my eye, inspired me to want to help people, especially kids,” she says.



Grateful Patient Story: McKenna

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