

Gold Medal Care

Impaired vision due to cataracts can have a huge impact on favorite activities. Surgery restored this athlete's vision and changed her life.

Kelly Rinfret loves to color. She loves to read, as well as swim, bowl, stand-up paddle board and play tennis in the Special Olympics. However, rapidly progressing cataracts forced Kelly, 35, who has Down syndrome, to curtail all of the activities she loves.

Instead of coloring until bedtime, she would opt to sit in a dark room instead. "She didn't like the lights on; she said it was too bright," observes Kelly's mother, Kathy Manha. "She didn't want to color."

Earlier this year, Kathy noticed that Kelly was starting to have difficulty with her vision. "She had lost some of her depth perception, and after talking to other parents of Down syndrome kids, I found that that's not uncommon," she says. "I didn't really get too worried about it."

Protecting your vision for life

The staff of Snead Eye Group looks forward to meeting the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. Offices are located at **4790 Barkley Circle, Building C, #103**, in Fort Myers, phone **(239) 936-8686** and **5335 Airport Pulling Road N.** in Naples, phone **(239) 594-5550**.

However, Kelly's symptoms progressed quickly, and it wasn't long until she couldn't see at all. "It got real bad, real fast," recalls Kathy. "She would stop and say, *Mom, where are you?* I would have to lead her around."

SNEAD EYE GROUP

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Kelly, who wears glasses, had been to the eye doctor just last May. However, by February, "I figured something not good was going on," describes Kathy, "so we went to Dr. Michael Madison. He quickly realized it was cataracts and sent us to Dr. Brad Snead."

"A miracle"

By the time Kelly saw Brad A. Snead, MD, of the Snead Eye Group, she was considered legally blind. Her visual impairment was caused by a type of cataract that is common in those with her condition. "She developed white cataracts," says Dr. Snead. "They were totally opaque white, which is very

characteristic of Down syndrome."

Kelly was scheduled for surgery right away, and her first eye was done on April 8, the day before her birthday. "Everyone in his office was very sweet and nice and kind and friendly, and just really patient with Kelly," remembers Kathy.

Afterward, "she didn't want to take the little eye pad off," Kathy relates. "She was a little bit afraid of what was going to happen, and she could see. That's what she said. She said, *I can see*, and everything changed."

This was evident the very next night, when the family went out for dinner. "Before, I couldn't let her go. If we were anywhere, I'd have to hang on to her," Kathy notes. "This time, she said, *Mom, there's a step. Mom, there's the curb. Mom, that's just a line on the road.* She was seeing it all. It was a miracle."

When she returned a week later to have the second eye done, Kelly wasn't nervous at all. "She told Dr. Snead it was a miracle, and she said she was ready for her second miracle," Kathy says.

Now, Kelly is back to enjoying the activities she loves. "She was not able to do *anything* that she had been able to do before," Kathy laments. "Now, she's back to doing *everything* that she was doing before."

Kelly was so elated to have her vision



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Optometrist Dr. Michael Madison (left) and Dr. Brad Snead with Kelly Rinfret, an avid Special Olympics athlete whom Dr. Snead treated for cataracts so severe that she was legally blind.

back that she gifted Dr. Snead with one of her Special Olympics medals – a gold medal she had earned for swimming. "That's very special to me," he says. "I know how special it was to her, and I just felt honored that she would give it to me."

"He earned it," says Kelly. "I like him." **FHCN**—Melanie Casey



Brad A. Snead, MD, earned his Bachelor of Science degree in biomedical sciences from Auburn University, where he graduated summa cum laude. He received his medical degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine and completed his ophthalmology residency at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. Dr. Snead is a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, the American College of Physicians and the Lee County Medical Society.

To learn more, please visit www.sneadeyegroup.com.