



National Marfan Foundation

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Contact Eileen Masciale
631-665-2163
publicity@marfan.org

**Kevin Blinder, MD, Washington University School of Medicine, to be Honored at
Heartworks St. Louis Gala, March 3**

Event to Benefit the National Marfan Foundation

PORT WASHINGTON, NY, January 23, 2012 – Kevin Blinder, MD, Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Washington University School of Medicine, is the 2012 recipient of the National Marfan Foundation’s Hero with a Heart Award. The presentation will be made at *Heartworks St. Louis*, a gala benefit for the Foundation to be held on March 3.

The National Marfan Foundation (NMF), which provides education, support and research on Marfan syndrome, a potentially fatal connective tissue disorder, is honoring Dr. Blinder for his expertise in treating complex retinal problems, including those that affect people who have Marfan syndrome and related disorders.

The cardiovascular complications of Marfan syndrome and related disorders are considered the most life-threatening aspect of the condition. However, it is often the ocular problems associated with Marfan syndrome that have the greatest impact on quality of life on a daily basis. Eye issues, ranging from early glaucoma to detached lenses and detached retinas, cause altered career and lifestyle choices, mild to severe pain and even early blindness.

“I am so proud to honor my colleague and friend, Kevin Blinder, at the fourth *Heartworks St. Louis*,” said Alan Braverman, MD, Director of the Marfan Syndrome Clinic at Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes Jewish Hospital, and Chair of the NMF’s Professional Advisory Board who serves as co-host of the gala with his wife, Rebecca. “Kevin provides the highest quality of patient care to all those who require his ocular expertise, and he and the Retina Institute have contributed significantly to the care of the Marfan patients we see at our clinic.”

The event has a special meaning for Dr. Braverman, who is also Alumni Endowed Professor in Cardiovascular Diseases, Washington University School of Medicine, as he lost his father to Marfan syndrome and has a brother and nephew who are affected with the condition.

Heartworks St. Louis is now in its fourth year. More than 250 people attended last year’s event, including leading St. Louis area clinicians and researchers on Marfan syndrome and members of the St. Louis Chapter of the National Marfan Foundation.

Heartworks St. Louis will be held at the Starlight Ballroom at the Chase Park Plaza. A cocktail reception will commence at 7 pm, with dinner and the awards ceremony at 8 pm. Entertainment will be provided by jazz vocalist Erin Bode.

Tickets to *Heartworks St. Louis* are \$200 each. To purchase, contact Kristin Braun at 516-883-8712, ext. 124, or kbraun@marfan.org.

2012 Hero with a Heart Honoree

Dr. Blinder joined the Retina Institute at the Washington University School of Medicine in 1999, after serving as the director of the retina institute at both University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Tennessee. He not only sees patients in the office, but also teaches current Washington University Ophthalmology residents and fellows and participates in Grand Rounds and various lecture forums.

A past president of the St. Louis Ophthalmological Society and the American Diabetes Association, Dr. Blinder has won numerous ophthalmologic awards during his career. He is also an active researcher, having been (or is currently) an investigator in 30 clinical trials dealing with macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, venous occlusive disease, uveitis and AIDS.

A supporter of *Heartworks St. Louis* since its inception in 2009, Dr. Blinder also participated in the NMF's annual conference when was held in St. Louis in 2005. He has also consulted with the Foundation when his expertise on eye issues related to Marfan syndrome is sought, including assistance in the creation of medical resources outlining care for Marfan patients with retinal disease.

“Although people with Marfan syndrome and related disorders are living a more normal lifespan due to the care they receive at clinics like that in St. Louis, they are dealing with increasingly challenging quality of life issues related to their chronic and progressive skeletal and vision problems,” said Carolyn Levering, NMF President and CEO. “We are thrilled to honor Dr. Blinder at *Heartworks St. Louis* this year. There is no doubt that Dr. Blinder, and specialists like him, give these patients hope for a better life.”

Previous Hero with a Heart Award recipients in St. Louis are:

2011: Keith Bridwell, MD, and Lawrence Lenke, MD, Washington University School of Medicine
2010: Gregorio Sicard, MD, Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital
2009: Nicholas T. Kouchoukos, MD, Missouri Baptist Medical Center

Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital: Leader in Marfan Syndrome Care and Research

Approximately 200,000 people in the U.S. have Marfan syndrome or a related connective tissue disorder. Experts say that about half of those affected do not know they have the potentially life-threatening condition and, without a diagnosis and treatment, are at risk of a sudden early death.

Marfan syndrome is a connective tissue disorder that affects the heart, blood vessels, eyes, bones, joints and lungs. It is often, but not always, characterized by a tall stature and disproportionately long legs and arms. Other skeletal manifestations are curvature of the spine, a protruding or indented chest and loose joints. The most serious problem associated with Marfan syndrome is its effect on the aorta, the main artery carrying blood away from the heart.

The aorta is prone to progressive enlargement, which can lead to tears in the aortic wall that require surgery. If aortic enlargement and tears are left undetected, the aorta may rupture, leading to sudden death.

The life expectancy for people with Marfan syndrome who are diagnosed and treated is now in the 70's due to advances in cardiovascular surgery, improvements in medical therapy and enhanced awareness and diagnosis. Without a proper diagnosis and medical management, patients with Marfan syndrome are at risk for aortic dissection and sudden death.

The Marfan Syndrome Clinics at Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital and at St. Louis Children's Hospital are among the leading Marfan syndrome clinics in the country, providing comprehensive and coordinated care for patients in all disciplines related to Marfan syndrome, most notable cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, vascular surgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology, medical genetics, and high-risk obstetrics.

Washington University School of Medicine is among 28 institutions in the U.S., Canada and abroad that are participating in a federally-funded clinical trial on a potentially new treatment for the aorta in people with Marfan syndrome. The researchers are comparing losartan, an already FDA-approved medication, and atenolol, a beta blocker that is the current gold standard treatment for Marfan syndrome.

The National Marfan Foundation

The National Marfan Foundation is a non-profit voluntary health organization dedicated to saving lives and improving the quality of life of individuals and families affected by the Marfan syndrome and related disorders by:

- Educating affected individuals, family members and the health care community about the Marfan syndrome.
- Advocating for and funding clinical and molecular research into the early detection and treatment of Marfan syndrome.
- Providing a network of local and special-interest support groups to help affected people and their families share experiences.

For more information on Marfan syndrome, contact the NMF at 800-8-MARFAN or visit the NMF's web site at www.marfan.org.

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