

# Policeman keeps eyes on crime with donated LASIK

Police Investigator Nick Sonnier of Biloxi has little control over what his day brings. But that no longer applies to his vision, after his LASIK laser eye surgery was donated by Dr. Rainna Bahadur, a Greenwood native.

"Being visually impaired with eyeglasses or contacts takes away your ability to protect yourself. Can LASIK be life-saving for me? Oh, yes," Sonnier said after his eye surgery. "The opportunity that people have to disable me on the job, LASIK takes that away."

"I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do one day to next as a policeman," added Sonnier. "It's what society has for me to do. New cases pop up every day."

Sonnier frequently handles felony arrests, with his cases including robbery, burglary, sexual assault, fraud, auto theft and DUL.

"It's a relief, not having to worry about contact lenses or glasses any more," he said.

Sonnier received LASIK vision correction without cost from ophthalmologist Bahadur, a partner at Eye Associates of the South in Biloxi.

Sonnier is the fourth Gulf Coast "emergency first responder" to receive complimentary LASIK from cornea specialist Bahadur and Eye Associates of the South, which has clinics with optical shops in Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Gulfport.

Bahadur said, "It is a tremendous honor for me to be allowed to work on our first responders. Every day, they literally put their lives on the line for citizens of the Gulf



Dr. Rainna Bahadur examines policeman Nick Sonnier, a LASIK patient.

Coast, including my family. I'm so pleased I can offer this 'thank you' for their service and sacrifice."

Sonnier was extremely nearsighted before his LASIK, which also corrected his vision better than his former contacts or glasses, according to a post-LASIK eye exam. "He was definitely legally blind without glasses or contacts," Bahadur said.

Sonnier's vision range was worse than 20/400, without correction. When you have 20/400 vision, you would have to be 20 feet away from an object to see what someone with standard vision would see at 400 feet, Bahadur explained.

After LASIK, Sonnier's vision is "perfect." It has improved to 20/20 in the left eye for close-up viewing and 20/20 in the right eye for dis-

tance.

"He finished up his medical eye drops, so his vision continued to improve as his eyes healed," she said.

Other first responders who received no-cost LASIK from Eye Associates of the South in the past few years include a Biloxi firefighter, a Marine Resources officer and another Biloxi police officer.

Sonnier won a Biloxi Police Department drawing to receive his LASIK - on the same day he received the

department's Office of the Quarter Award.

"I was surprised I won the LASIK drawing because I'd never won anything in my life," said Sonnier, 46, a Biloxi native. "LASIK is something I always wanted to do. But I'm a single father raising two boys, so I never would have spent the money on myself. I can't say thanks enough!"

The department's public information officer, Sgt. Jackie Rhodes, said, "So far, we've had two times she offered it

free to a police officer, and the two who won (drawings) both love it."

Rhodes, a patient of Eye Associates of the South since the early 1990s, first went there for soft contacts, then finally chose LASIK from Bahadur. "I did one eye for reading and one for distance, just like my contacts were - monovision," he said. Both Sonnier and Rhodes chose to receive monovision LASIK, instead of getting identical correction for both eyes.

"With LASIK, the difference is between night and day, not having to have something artificial on my eyes any more," Rhodes said. "I just have my eyes! I highly recommend it to anyone."

Rhodes added that he also chose Eye Associates of the South for his LASIK because Bahadur performs it in an outpatient surgery center (Cedar Lake Surgery Center) instead of in an office.

Eye Associates of the South also offers free pre-LASIK screening to ensure patients' eyes are suitable for LASIK. If they are not, there is no fee, Bahadur explained.

Their LASIK patients are offered up to two years to pay, same as cash, through no-interest financing by Care-Credit.

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