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Eye clinic performs free surgery for first responder

By GEORGIA SPARLING - Special to the Sun Herald

Senior patrol officer Robert McKeithen's world has come into focus, thanks to ophthalmologist Rainna Bahadur of Eye Associates of the South.

When Eye Associates got a new Ziemer's Femtosecond LDV Laser machine about Sept. 11, Bahadur came up with the idea to offer free surgeries to local first responders under the title the "Ambassador program."

"We wanted to offer this fantastic technology to people for whom it can basically save their life," said Bahadur, who performed the free surgery Wednesday.



Georgia Sparling/Special to the Sun Herald
Ophthalmologist Rainna Bahadur, right, gives patrol officer Robert McKeithen a post-surgery eye check.

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For police officers such as McKeithen, wearing glasses on the job can be a risk. The nearsighted McKeithen has owned about 40 pairs of glasses since he was 7.

Many of those have broken while he was working at the scenes of domestic disturbances and fights in his 23 years on the police force.

"You get out of your car in the summer and they fog up," McKeithen said. "That's a danger issue if a suspect is right around the corner."

McKeithen put his name into a lottery with other Biloxi police officers but never expected to be chosen for the surgery.

"When they called my name I was shocked," he said. "I never win nothing."

After the 15-minute procedure Wednesday, McKeithen said his eyes stung but his sight

was already clearer. He plans to return to work next week.

Bahadur said she hopes they can offer the procedure to firefighters in the future, as well as other first responders in area towns.

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