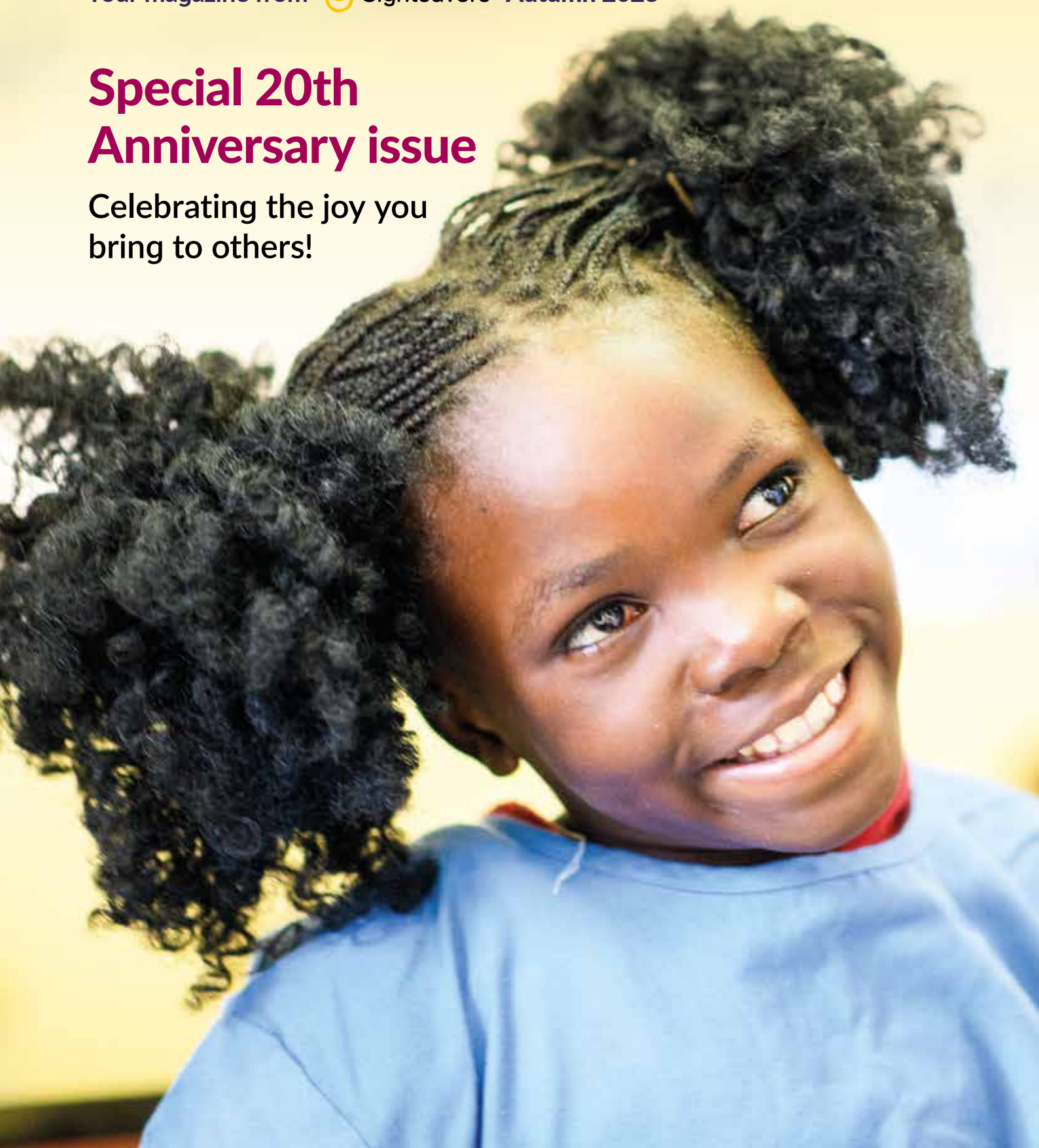


Focus

Your magazine from  Sightsavers Autumn 2023

Special 20th Anniversary issue

Celebrating the joy you
bring to others!



Thank you

A special message from our Patron

Is mian liom mo chomhghairdeas a sheoladh chugaibh agus mo bhuíochas ó chroí a thabhairt do Sightsavers Ireland as a n-obair fhiúntach agus iad ag comóradh 20 bliain na heagraíochta.

May I extend my warmest congratulations and sincere gratitude to all at Sightsavers Ireland on the occasion of your 20th anniversary.

Your tireless efforts over the past 20 years, together with your dedication to providing access to vital eye care resources, treatment options and education has given so much-needed healthcare, opportunity, education, and empowerment to countless communities in more than 30 countries across the developing world.

Your work in protecting sight, fighting disease and promoting the rights and opportunities for people with visual impairments and other disabilities, has enabled so many worldwide to live a life without the burden of blindness.

As Patron of Sightsavers, it is a privilege indeed to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of the generous supporters who have aided Sightsavers over the years. The generosity, kindness and compassion that you have exhibited to our global human family have enabled Sightsavers to achieve so much, and your continued support is crucial to its ongoing success.

It is important for us all to remember that unfortunately many people around the world still struggle with vision impairment and blindness, and that ever more urgent work needs to be done to address this debilitating but preventable affliction.

Together, by confronting this great global challenge, our efforts can help reduce poverty and inequity, and contribute to the creation of a world where blindness is no longer a barrier to participation and well-being.

May I wish you continued success in your endeavours, and I look forward to seeing the positive changes you will bring in the years to come in your efforts to create a more equitable, just, and fair future for all.

Arís mo bhuíochas libh uilig agus guím gach rath oraibh don toadhcháí.



Beir beannacht.

Michael D. Higgins
President of Ireland
Uachtarán na hÉireann



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Sightsavers, First Floor, Spencer
House, Spencer Row, Dublin 1

Your wonderful words

We asked you to tell us why you support Sightsavers, and what an amazing response you gave us!



I'm going to let you in on a secret. There wasn't a dry eye in the Sightsavers office as we read through all your beautiful, touching messages. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone who took the time to write in. We were very humbled at your response.

You shared lots of reasons why saving and protecting sight is so important to you. Many of you got to know us through a TV or postal appeal and were touched by the stories of the adults and children we reach. Some have had personal experiences of cataracts and other visual impairments and wanted to give the precious gift of sight to others. What moved us most of all was your immense

desire to give people less fortunate the chance to see and live their lives to the full, even though you're never likely to meet them.

We're very privileged, because we get to see how much your kindness changes people's lives, and we love sharing their stories with you in Focus. In this issue, we get to share yours too, and I hope you enjoy the selection we've chosen. I'm just sorry we couldn't feature them all.

Michael

20 years, 20 messages

"What inspired me to help Sightsavers was my daughter, Amy. She was diagnosed with a rare form of glaucoma four years ago, aged 12. Since then, she has had severe sight loss and has had numerous surgeries and procedures to control the pressure, which has left her almost blind. Amy is doing well now, and she can get around with contact lenses, which I'm so grateful for. So, if I can help others in my own small way, I will gladly. Thank you."

Fiona – Co. Mayo

“Following a very successful procedure to remove cataracts from both my eyes, I was motivated to assist Sightsavers! I truly realise the precious gift of sight and felt privileged when my vision was restored to full capacity. Hence my desire to help others less fortunate experience the joy of seeing the magnificent beauty that surrounds us. My contributions came from a grateful heart for the visual magic I have received.”

Paddy – Co. Donegal

"I can see from your newsletters that I am helping, plus giving hope to lots of children in this difficult world. The smile on their faces is enough to see the result of how I'm helping in my small way. God bless you all."

Susan – Co. Cork

"I have been supporting Sightsavers for many years now and it kicks my heart when reading the spring issue of Focus to see how many people have had their sight saved through donations. I will continue to support your fantastic work for as long as it takes to help those in need. I send you all my thanks and love. Continue your great work."

Pat – Co. Wexford

“I have always believed Sightsavers is a well-run, transparent charity. The work you do is incredible. You explain what you do so clearly. If a few Euro can help to give the precious gift of sight to any of my fellow human beings, then that's good enough for me. A quote "I opened two beautiful gifts this morning, they were my eyes." Thank you Sightsavers.”

William – Co. Dublin

"I lived and worked in northern Malawi for 20 years and saw first-hand the joy your work and interventions brought to so many. For so little we can transform lives. Wishing you continued success."

James – Co. Dublin

“It is so inspiring to read the stories of all the beautiful people that are helped so much by Sightsavers. So happy to hear that Malawi has eliminated trachoma, joining Ghana and the Gambia. A big thank you to the doctors and the nurses who carry out this vital life changing work. God bless you all and continued success.”

Helen – Co. Limerick

"Having witnessed at first hand the work of Sightsavers in rural India as many young people's lives were transformed by cataract operations, I was inspired to raise as much as possible for Sightsavers. The Bus Pull in 2008 and raffles were just some ways this was achieved. Keep up the great work."

Christy – Co. Dublin

“I'm very impressed with the wonderful work Sightsavers does in Africa, and around the world. The stories of people's lives being changed because of Sightsavers restoring sight to people who don't have access to medical care. It's inspiring what Sightsavers do and I'm glad to be a very small part of that work.”

Marie – Co. Meath

"It's lovely to have good news in these difficult times and I always enjoy reading your magazine with all its good news stories. I feel a strong connection to all the wonderful people featured. Thank you for all the wonderful work you do."

Caroline – Co. Dublin

“Having watched the Sightsavers appeal on television some years ago, it broke my heart to see that small child crying. I signed up for a small monthly donation towards Sightsavers. Now I smile every time I get Focus magazine in the post.”

Mary – Co. Clare

“As a photographer, I enjoy all the wonder and beauty of our planet Earth. Amazing sunrises and sunsets, the beauty of a field full of flowers, and a sky at night with endless stars, beautiful smiles on kids’ faces and all the amazing wonder of life that can be seen. This is why I think sight is so important, so I choose to help Sightsavers. Thanks for what you do.”

Frank – Co. Dublin

“I suffered with a painful eye problem three years ago and am now, thankfully, greatly improved. The sight of a little baby boy resembling one of my grandchildren moved me to donate to Sightsavers. As I am now 86 years old, I hope to be able to continue donating for a few more years.”

Margaret – Co. Dublin

“Thanks so much for the great work. Congratulations on celebrating your 20th anniversary, you really make a huge difference to so many deserving causes. Best of luck. Here’s to the next 20 years!”

Martha – Co. Limerick

“We support Sightsavers because our dad, Patrick, supported Sightsavers for over 20 years. Dad passed away in January 2022, but we want to continue to support in his memory. He felt that for a person to lose their sight for the want of a little money was the greatest shame. He received a letter from Sightsavers before he died, thanking him for two decades of support and he was deeply touched.”

Patrick’s children – Co. Dublin

“Just looking at the beautiful picture of Mary smiling on the front of the postcard inspires me to continue with my support of Sightsavers. What a wonderful organisation, restoring sight to so many people and enabling them to return to school, work etc. I have been a supporter for 24 years and hope to continue for many more.”

Anne – Co. Roscommon

“I can’t imagine how dreadful it would be not to see the flowers, trees, and total beauty on this Earth of ours provides. If I can help just a little to enable someone else to enjoy this beauty and to see their loved ones, then I am happy.”

Elizabeth – Co. Cork

“To look at Mary’s happy face and beautiful smile is proof of the wonderful work you do in restoring sight to children and adults in Nigeria. Wishing you continued support in your wonderful work. Congratulations to all the Sightsavers on your 20th Anniversary. Enjoyed reading Focus Magazine.”

Frances – Co. Cork

“My wife and I are very happy to be able to support Sightsavers. My father lost his sight aged 72 and lived till he was 80. I witnessed the devastation it caused him. Before losing his sight, he had been a very active man. My wife and I are in our 80s and will continue to support Sightsavers and many other deserving charities for as long we can.”

Brian – Co. Dublin

“Dear Sightsavers, my name is John, a retired Bus Eireann driver and I am delighted to help as much as I can with all the good work you do in all the African countries, Ghana, Gambia, Malawi saving all those peoples’ sight. I had cataracts myself and I know what sight means to those people. I would like to thank all those Irish volunteers, especially Pádraic Mannion and Sinead Kane. God Bless.”

John – Co. Kilkenny

More magical messages

Although we sadly couldn’t include all your lovely messages here, you can see them at our anniversary event in December, details coming soon.

5-year-old cataract patient Noah Phiri from Zambia, with his elder brother 15-year-old Edward (also a cataract patient)

© Sightsavers/Hudson Chirwa

Capturing the joy

Ace photographer and videographer Jason Mulikita explains the connection he feels with the children he pictures

My brother gave me my first analogue camera, and I was able to use photography to sustain me through boarding school, before becoming a wedding photographer. When I got my first humanitarian assignment, a new world opened up to me. Knowing my work was helping to change lives was very rewarding.

In 2017, I started working for Sightsavers and I've been privileged to see the great impact of its crucial projects to save and protect sight. I've also learned that these projects are only possible because of generous people like you.

I know how important sight is. Not just because I'm a photographer, but because a couple of years ago I was involved in a terrible road accident and suffered head trauma that damaged my optical nerve, causing cataracts in both eyes. Thankfully, my condition was diagnosed, and I was able to get treatment at Lusaka Eye Hospital. I count myself lucky that

I was able to afford the operation, especially as so many of those I photograph cannot.

Since then, I've gone back to the hospital many times, recording the stories of children like Luyando, who features on the cover of your Focus magazine. Every time I capture a child's journey as they receive their life-changing surgery and have their sight restored I become overwhelmed with emotion. It's one of the most amazing feelings one can have.

That's why I'm proud to tell you about Sightsavers' campaign to support 2,000 new child cataract operations by the end of the year. It's the most amazing gift you could give, and I truly hope that through my photographs you can feel the joy and heartfelt gratitude of the children you help.

Warm regards and thank you!

Jason Mulikita

© Sightsavers/Hudson Chirwa



2,000 Eyes Appeal

Will you help more children see?

Inspired by Jason, and as part of our 20th anniversary celebrations, we're aiming to deliver 2,000 additional child cataract surgeries by the end of 2023.

You can donate now by returning the enclosed form, visiting sightsavers.ie/focus or calling **1800 20 20 20**. Please help us and give more children like Luyando the best chance in life.

"I have seen so many amazing smiles on children's faces, thanks to the impact of Sightsavers work. It's a privilege to witness how your donations transform the lives of so many children, families and communities. I would like to say a heartfelt thank you in their place. Please don't stop helping those who need it the most, they really depend on generous people like you"

Jason Mulikita



© Sightsavers/Hudson Chirwa



Photos in strip: © Sightsavers/Jason Mulikita

Picture perfect



Kieran captured our hearts with his prize-winning painting, and made his family incredibly proud

Every year, children from all over Ireland get to show their amazing creativity in our popular Junior Painter of the Year competition. And young Kieran Monahan who attends Our Lady's School in Durrow, Co. Laois, really rose to the challenge.

Kieran is incredibly close to his sisters, Ciara and Kimberly, and all three are artistic with lots of painting, drawing and crafts enjoyed at home. Kieran is his mum's 'little painter,' though, even helping to paint his own room and offering to continue through the rest of the house!

Suzie was unsure of how Kieran would react to the awards ceremony, held at the Pavilion of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, so the whole family made a big effort to be there. Suzie needn't have worried. Kieran spent much of his time enjoying the refreshments and being on stage with magician Reuben the Entertainer – oblivious to his mum's concerns.

Kieran's award-winning painting now proudly hangs in the living room at home. Although it makes his sisters jealous, it's a great marker of his achievements and the importance of being included. Congratulations Kieran and keep painting!

Calling Ireland's budding artists

Junior Painter of the Year is open each year to all primary school children in mainstream and special stream schools and classes. If you are a teacher, or if your child or grandchild's school would like to take part in next year's event, please email Meadhbh at morourke@sightsavers.ie



Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



Kieran, who is autistic, painted himself and one of his sisters having fun in a ball pool – something they clearly enjoy doing. His mum, Suzie, knew nothing about the competition until the school told her Kieran had won a prize in both the junior and senior infants' categories. She was absolutely thrilled: "To this day, a year later, the prize and ceremony still mean so much to Kieran. It's a big deal for a child with a disability."



© Adventure.ie

"I'm still in awe of the Arctic Challenge. I have memories imprinted in my head and heart"

Owen, Limerick

Arctic adventure

Our first expedition raised an extraordinary €90,000 to save sight and change lives. You can be part of the next one!

Last January, as most of us snuggled under our duvets, 15 brave Sightsavers supporters set off on our First Light for Sight Arctic Expedition to help raise money for others. Martina Parker and Owen Campbell were two members of the team, and it was an experience they'll never forget.

Martina discovered a lot about herself during the challenge. "I learned that we can do anything we set our minds to once the decision has been made. When you challenge yourself, you grow and enjoy the journey. You can rise to the challenge and achieve things you never thought you could, so go for it."

"I found the adventure brilliant and life-changing," says Owen. "I was running on adrenaline the entire time. It's only when I look back at photos and videos that I realise how extreme the environment was. I was on a high the whole time. I would go back there in the morning if I could!"

"If you'd like to take the challenge just do it! You'll do so much to change the lives of people who need sight-saving operations, and you'll have the experience of a lifetime"

Martina, Galway



Sign up now for the 2024 adventure

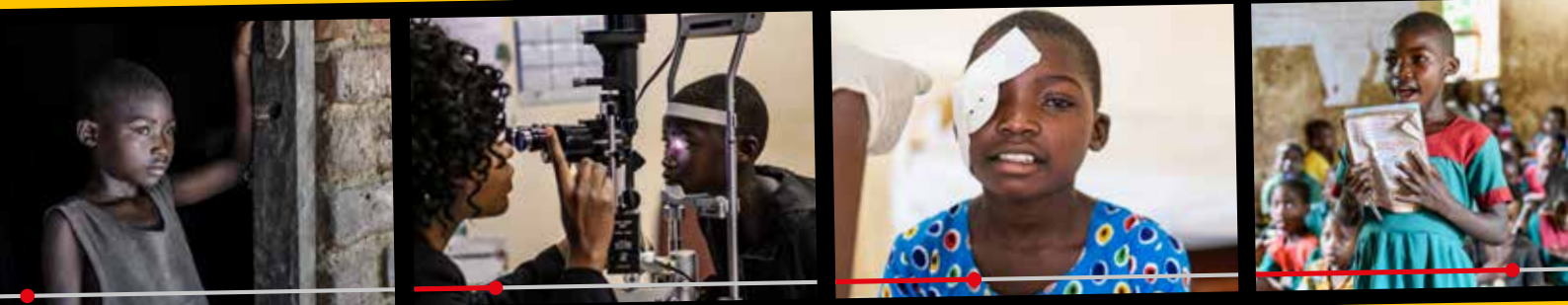
Led by our partners, Adventure.ie, our next **First Light for Sight Arctic Expedition** is in January 2024 and places are filling up fast. Find out more and sign up now by emailing the team at sunrise@sightsavers.ie



***** Limited places available! *****

Keep making miracles

You can help give the gift of sight to more children like Mary when you make or update your Will for free



Ten-year-old Mary can see again, thanks to a cataract operation made possible by a kind and generous Sightsavers supporter. Could you give the most amazing gift of all in your Will and help more children like her after your lifetime?

Every day, children and adults in the world's poorest countries lose their sight to cataracts, and to preventable diseases such as trachoma and river blindness. Mary was in danger of becoming irreversibly blind, until her family discovered she could have a free Sightsavers-supported cataract operation. Having her sight back has been nothing short of a miracle for Mary – life is brighter again, and she can't stop smiling.

A gift in your Will could make miracles like Mary's happen for many years to come. And it needn't cost you a cent.

Sightsavers and the Irish Free Wills Network have made it possible for you to make or update your Will for free, with the help and advice of a local solicitor. You're under no obligation to include a gift to Sightsavers or

any other cause. Plus, you can be sure that neither we nor the Free Wills Network will share your details with anyone else.

Rest assured, if you decide to include a gift in your Will to Sightsavers today or many years from now, it will have the power to transform people's lives forever.

If you're ready to find out more, in complete confidence, about updating or making your Will for free, please email Declan White at dwhite@sightsavers.ie or telephone 01 6637666. You can also write to Declan at Sightsavers, Spencer House, Spencer Row, Dublin 1.

16,600

In the last five years alone, Sightsavers has received 105 gifts in supporters' Wills – enough to help 16,600 children like Mary in urgent need of sight-restoring cataract surgery

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Pages 2 and 3, clockwise from top:

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This page: © Sightsavers/Jason Mulikita

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