

## WILLIAMSON COUNTY

### City administrator to be hired soon

The next Franklin city administrator may be hired before the end of October.

Mayor John Schroer and several city aldermen say they're confident one of the five men they interviewed Saturday will be selected to lead the city's day-to-day operations and help them make decisions.

"I think we have five good candidates, but there's one that stands out in my mind that I think would do this city great," Schroer said.

Candidates were asked a battery of questions Sat-

urday. They will be ranked based on those interviews. Schroer will make a final recommendation to the aldermen.

Schroer said that "without a doubt" a choice for the job would come before the end of the month.

The hiring would end a months-long search to replace longtime city administrator Jay Johnson, who resigned in February. Assistant city administrator Russ Truell has served in the role during the interim.

— KEVIN WALTERS

kewalters@tennessean.com

## TENNESSEE

### 9 apply for vacancy on appeals court

Nine people have applied to fill a vacancy in the eastern section of the Tennessee Court of Appeals.

The vacancy was created by Judge Sharon G. Lee's appointment to the state Supreme Court.

All but one of the applicants are lawyers in private practice, while Vonda M. Laughlin is an associate professor at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City.

Another applicant, John Westley McClarty of Chattanooga, was among the three finalists for the Supreme Court position

that Lee was selected for.

The applicants include four lawyers from Knoxville: Adrienne L. Anderson, Mark Antoine Brown, Carol S. Nickle and Sarah Yarber Sheppard. The remaining applicants are Sharon Dawn Coppock of Strawberry Plains, Conrad Mark Troutman of LaFollette and George Taylor Underwood Jr. of Powell.

The Judicial Selection Commission will meet Nov. 18 in Knoxville to narrow the list down to three finalists.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS  
info@ap.org

# Artificial cornea restores man's full sight after 36 years

By **Kate Howard**

THE TENNESSEAN

and **Tracie Simer**

GANNETT TENNESSEE

For the first time in 36 years, Randy Mathenia can open his left eye and read the letter E.

It was a big moment for Mathenia, who lost sight in one eye after a serious injury. He endured three failed cornea transplants, but his latest surgery — the embedding of an artificial cornea — appears to have been successful.

The procedure, called a Boston Keratoprosthesis, was performed last week at Saint Thomas Hospital. Before the surgery, Mathenia said, his left eye could barely see his fingers in front of his face.

"It's been a long time waiting for the technology to catch up to the needs I have," he said.

Mathenia's surgery was the first of its kind performed in Middle Tennessee, said Ming Wang, eye surgeon from Wang Vision Institute. He estimated that 5 percent to 10 percent of his patients, who are referred to him from other doctors worldwide, have the type of eye injury that could make an artificial cornea transplant useful.



**Randy Mathenia has vision in his left eye since Dr. Ming Wang of the Wang Vision Institute in Nashville performed an artificial corneal transplant.** SUBMITTED PHOTO

"This is designed to help these patients who are really at the end of the line, and have been told by doctors for a long time they have no chance to see again," Wang said.

Mathenia's body rejected traditional cornea implants three times. The artificial cornea, made of synthetic materials and about the size of a contact lens, is unlikely to be rejected because it doesn't contain any human antigens.

### Falling object hurt eye

When Mathenia was 18, a large item fell off a top shelf and injured his eye. The severity of the injury and

the failure of every traditional treatment since then made the Jackson, Tenn., man, now 54, a good candidate for the new procedure, Wang said.

About 10 years ago, Mathenia and his wife, Mitzi, began watching the prosthetic cornea transplant go through the Food and Drug Administration trials.

"We'd get our hopes up, and then the (transplant) would be rejected," his wife said. "It seems like, for the first time, we have the right technology, the right doctor and the right time."

Though Mathenia's vision will probably never be 20/20, Wang said he

expects the functioning of his patient's eye to continue to improve. He can see more lights and bright colors, and the distance of his sight has also improved.

While new technology is always expensive, Wang said his charitable foundation, The Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration, works to offset the cost of the surgery, and medical staff often donate their time.

The risks are minimal, Wang said, so long as a qualified doctor is performing the surgery. Though infection and trauma are always possible concerns, loss of vision is typically not an issue because the patients have already lost their sight. Anywhere from 70 percent to 90 percent of people who have artificial cornea transplants have improved sight and retain it, Wang said.

"We're talking about patients who have very little to lose," Wang said. "They're often told they'll never see again. From their perspective, if the technology is available, the doctor is specialized and the resources are available, they should really consider it."

Contact Kate Howard at 615-726-8968 or by e-mail at kahoward@tennessean.com.