

Robert Abel, Jr., M.D.

Physician, Educator, Humanitarian

A 1961 graduate of Cheltenham High School, Robert Abel, Jr. distinguished himself as a well-rounded student. He excelled in advanced placement courses, earned Honor Society membership, competed on the wrestling and tennis teams, and served as art editor of *The Cheltonian*. He earned his B.A. in Biology from Wesleyan University and his M.D. from Jefferson Medical College, where he was awarded the prestigious internal medicine Practice Prize. Dr. Abel completed his ophthalmology residency at Mount Sinai Hospital, serving as Chief Resident, and undertook a fellowship at the University of Florida, performing over 200 corneal transplants in that year.

Dr. Abel's innovative career in ophthalmology includes patents for artificial corneas, founding the Castroviejo Corneal Society, teaching surgical procedures, world blindness programs and incorporating foreign ophthalmologists into the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and introducing UV blockers in surgical microscopes. He has served as a Clinical Professor at Ophthalmology at Thomas Jefferson University, the chair of ophthalmology at Christiana Care Health Systems, and a consultant for the landmark Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS). As a medical student he changed the curriculum at Jefferson and, as a faculty member, introduced integrative medicine.

Dr. Abel has published over 220 peer-reviewed articles, 36 chapters in medical texts and 10 books, including *The Eye Care Revolution*. He lectures on integrative ophthalmology and the eye-mind connection. He has received the Senior Honor Award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology and fellowships in the Royal Academy of Physicians (UK). American College of Surgeons and American College of Pharmacology and mensa.

Despite early struggles with undiagnosed dyslexia, Dr. Abel's unconventional approach and perseverance have defined his career. His commitment to service is exemplified by founding eye banks in Delaware, Jordan, and Tunisia, as well as the Delaware chapter of Vision to Learn (which has provided over 23,000 free eye exams and glasses to school children), and the Delaware Children's Peace Art project. Even in retirement he continues his humanitarian efforts, currently working to establish an eye bank in Rwanda, consulting, and serving on the VTL mobile clinic.

In recognition of his lifelong contributions, Dr. Abel has been honored with awards including Delaware Today's Top Doctor (30+ years), the Pacem in Terris Peacemaker Prize, the Lions Eye Bank Crystal Visionary Award, and, in 2025, Wesleyan University's Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. Abel is truly humbled to receive a commendable place in the Cheltenham High School Hall of Fame.

