

A SHARED VISION:

# EXCELLENCE IN EYE CARE

*at St. Luke's*

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

DR. KIMBERLY COCKERHAM  
AND DR. KIMBERLY IRELAND  
BRING DECADES OF SURGICAL  
EXPERTISE AND COMPASSIONATE  
CARE TO THE VILLAGES

**V**ision means more than just seeing clearly. It's about freedom—driving yourself to meet friends, reading your grandchild's expressions, staying active in the life you've built here. When clarity fades, everything else feels at risk.

For Dr. Kimberly Ireland, restoring that clarity is everything.

"The difference eye surgery can make for a patient's life is profound," she says.

Behind that statement is a 30-year career built on a fundamental belief: vision is about more than eyesight. It's about autonomy, confidence and living fully.

At St. Luke's in The Villages, Dr. Ireland has spent 14 years building a practice around that philosophy. This year, she welcomes Dr. Kimberly Cockerham, an oculoplastic surgeon whose credentials span 15 years of military service, Stanford Medicine and extensive published research.

What distinguishes both physicians is their commitment to understanding what matters most to each patient.



Dr. Kimberly Cockerham

Dr. Kimberly Ireland

## A foundation built on precision and care

Dr. Ireland's path to ophthalmology began with an early fascination with healing and a desire to help others with compassion and skill. Medical school clarified her calling.

"Surgery of the eye is both complex and requires delicate precision," Dr. Ireland says.

But her journey was shaped by more than clinical training.

"I am a child of the 1970s and grateful that I was taught as a young woman that all career paths were accessible," she says.

"I have had wonderful mentors along my journey."

She built her expertise methodically: High Honors in Biology from Bates College, medical degree as an Honor Alumna from Albany Medical College, and ophthalmology residency at Storm Eye Institute at the Medical University of South Carolina. After a decade refining her surgical technique in private practice, she was recruited to serve as Department Chair for a multi-specialty group

in Wisconsin, where she led significant clinical expansion and ensured patients had access to advanced cataract care.

When her parents, Roland and Rosemary Couture, moved to The Villages community in 2010, Dr. Ireland recognized a place where quality of life and independence were deeply valued. When St. Luke's Cataract and Laser institute sought a surgeon to build a practice, the opportunity aligned with what mattered to her family.

"I have raised my three children in this community and am very happy to have established roots here over the past 14 years," she says.

As Medical Director at St. Luke's at The Villages, Dr. Ireland maintains the same standards she established in Wisconsin: clinical excellence, thorough patient education and individualized care.

"Patients should consider cataract surgery if their cataracts are interfering with their quality of life, enjoyment of activities, or confidence driving," she says, explaining that her approach centers on listening to patients' concerns and explaining options clearly.





## Expanding expertise in oculoplastic care

Dr. Cockerham's arrival brings specialized care that addresses both medical and functional concerns: drooping eyelids that block vision, tear duct issues, and complex reconstructions following skin cancer treatment. For Villages residents whose active lifestyles depend on clear, comfortable vision, her expertise opens important new possibilities.

Her path to this subspecialty began during her general surgery internship at Letterman Army Medical Center.

"I was inspired by the plastic reconstruction rotation, especially the eyelid area as particularly challenging," Dr. Cockerham says.

She pursued advanced training with two fellowships at Walter Reed Army Hospital in neuro-ophthalmology and oculoplastics, following her graduation with top honors from George Washington University. Her military service included serving as Chief of Oculoplastics and Orbital Disease at Walter Reed, earning multiple military commendations. Since 2006, she has served as Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor at Stanford School of Medicine, contributing more than 80 peer-reviewed publications to her field.

Now settled in The Villages, she's bringing that experience to the community.

"Dr. Ireland and the entire team at St. Luke's has been wonderful, and I'm looking forward to serving this community for many years to come," says Dr. Cockerham.

## Advanced techniques, proven outcomes

Modern cataract surgery has evolved significantly, and Dr. Ireland brings that progress to The Villages.

"Cataract surgery has improved since I began training 30 years ago," she says. The procedure at St. Luke's at The Villages is minimally invasive. That means no needle, not even an IV, with small incisions and no stitches or patches required. The surgery itself takes about 10 minutes.

"Patients can have both eyes scheduled within a week and see improvements in vision within a few days. It is both convenient and safe," Dr. Ireland says.

The approach emphasizes safety, precision, and minimal disruption to daily life, with the only restriction being no swimming for the first week.

Dr. Cockerham's work addresses a different set of needs. Oculoplastic surgery focuses on the structures surrounding the eye—eyelids, tear ducts, and orbital tissues—treating both medical conditions and functional concerns.

Her most complex cases involve reconstructing eyelids after skin cancer removal.

"Reconstruction can be complex using skin grafts and flaps," she says.

She also addresses common functional issues: drooping eyelids that block vision, chronic tearing and eyelid malposition's that cause irritation.

Dr. Cockerham emphasizes the value of early intervention.

"If you notice an eyelid lesion that's itching or changing, seek evaluation promptly. Earlier treatment often means simpler reconstruction," she says.

Her practice encompasses both medically necessary procedures and aesthetic enhancements, always with an eye toward natural-looking results that preserve or restore function.

## The importance of listening

Both physicians emphasize that their most valuable tool is not surgical but personal: the ability to listen.

"For many, the thought of an eye procedure can be concerning," Dr. Ireland says. "Our goal at St. Luke's is to provide a reassuring and thorough exam with complete testing to ensure your vision concerns will be improved with surgery."

Understanding patients' hopes and fears, she notes, is critical to successful outcomes.

Dr. Cockerham describes her approach as collaborative.

"My goal is to partner with patients to create an individualized plan," Dr. Cockerham says. "Two patients might have similar conditions but different priorities. Communication is essential."

This patient-centered philosophy made a significant difference for one of Dr. Ireland's patients. After losing her husband, the woman failed her driving test.

"She was fearful that she would have to stop driving and lose her home and independence," Dr. Ireland recalls. "After examination we reviewed the option of cataract surgery and she decided to proceed. Improving her sight helped her retain her ability to drive safely and increased her confidence."

## A practice built on partnership

When asked about her greatest source of pride, Dr. Ireland points to her team at St. Luke's.

"It is an honor and privilege when a patient entrusts their eyes to my care, but I'm most proud of the team of caregivers we have here at St. Luke's," Dr. Ireland says. "We have an exceptional group of people who

*EACH DAY AT ST. LUKE'S WE STRIVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR PATIENTS' LIVES AND FULFILL OUR PURPOSE.*

— DR. KIMBERLY IRELAND



are committed to a purpose-driven practice. They show up and work tirelessly to serve this community with compassion."

St. Luke's has built a reputation in The Villages for dedicated eye care.

"Seven eye care providers relocated to this region from around the country to join our practice," Dr. Ireland says. "And I'm happy that our success helps bring more exceptional care to our population."

Working in partnership with local optometrists, the practice extends specialized care throughout the region, ensuring patients receive seamless, comprehensive treatment close to home.

## Preserving vision, maintaining independence

Both physicians want Villages residents to understand an important truth: declining vision is not an inevitable part of aging.

"Patients will often ask if vision is normally 'supposed to' diminish with advancing age," Dr. Ireland says. "This is false. Our eyes can, and should, provide clear bright vision throughout our entire lifetimes. Having cataract surgery when needed allows patients to restore vision and quality of life. Patients can keep enjoying their activities and these surroundings, maintain independence, balance and reduce the risk of falling or injury."

Both physicians stress that eye health reflects overall health.

Conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease can significantly impact vision. Managing these conditions and maintaining annual eye examinations are essential for preserving sight.

With locations at Lake Sumter Landing and Brownwood, St. Luke's at The Villages continues a legacy of patient-focused care. Part of the St. Luke's family—a practice with a long-standing commitment to exceptional eye care—the Villages locations uphold a simple promise: exceptional care delivered with integrity and respect. Dr. Ireland and Dr. Cockerham exemplify that commitment: combining clinical excellence with genuine personal attention, treating each patient as an individual, and maintaining the highest standards of surgical and medical care.

For Villages residents, that commitment translates to something essential; the ability to see clearly the moments that matter: a sunrise over the lake the ball at the net. Vision that supports not just sight, but the active, independent life this community cherishes.

*St. Luke's*

*Life Changing Vision*

St. Luke's at The Villages has locations at Lake Sumter Landing and The Center for Advanced Healthcare at Brownwood, offering comprehensive ophthalmology services including cataract surgery, oculoplastic procedures, retina care, glaucoma treatment, and general eye wellness exams.