



VOSH-ONE

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity of New England

Winter/Spring 2008, 2009

Upcoming

VOSH-ONE trips for 2009

Thinking about helping out on a VOSH-One trip? Please don't hesitate to inquire about joining one of the VOSH-ONE eyecare clinics listed below. If these don't work for you, go to www.VOSH.org for information regarding other VOSH trips around the globe. When you visit www.VOSH.org, click onto VOSH-ONE on the Chapters page, for additional trip photos. And, while you're at it, check out VOSH-ONE.org, our own website.

● In January, 2009, four faculty members and a team of students from the New England College of Optometry will return to the Bluefields area of Nicaragua to team up with Bob Peck, program coordinator of a team of Williams College students. Contact: harbe@neco.edu

● A group of ODs will assist a multi-disciplinary medical mission (ASAPROSAR) when it returns to Santa Ana and San Miguel, El Salvador, in late January, 2009. Contact: harvizeltzer@comcast.net

● At the request of one of his patients who is a native of Guatemala and is involved in projects there, Derek Feifke, OD, will lead an eyecare team to the area of Antigua, Guatemala, from March 15-22, 2009. Contact: decabs@aol.com

● Chris Fields, OD, and Jay Jordan, OD, will be leading a team to the area of Managua, Nicaragua, in early February, 2009. Contact CMJFields@aol.com

● SVOSH-ONE, the student VOSH group at the New England College of Optometry, is planning a VOSH trip to the Dominican Republic or Argentina during the week of April 11, 2009. Faculty Advisor is Bina Patel, OD. Contact: PatelB@neco.edu or student leader wendy_crusberg@neco.edu

● Linda Bennett, OD, of Belmont, will be leading a trip to Armenia from October 9-22, 2009. Contact lbennettod@earthlink.net

● Jenifer Ambler, OD, of Vermont is the leader of the eyecare portion of a mixed medical group known as the "Sight and Bite" team, which has been active in Suchitoto and Apopa, El Salvador, since the early 1990s. Return date: November, 2009. Contact: amblerj@sover.net

Dr. Bina Patel named to V/I Board

We are proud to make note that our own Bina Patel, OD, faculty member at the New England College of Optometry has been named to the Board of VOSH/INTERNATIONAL.



Dr. Bina Patel, shown kneeling at lower left front, with her VOSH team in the Dominican Republic. Dr. Patel's report on this mission is on page 2A).

Dr. Patel has been an active VOSH member since 1997, participating in trips mainly to Mexico, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. She was asked by students to be a faculty liaison after her first trip with them in 1997. She is an active member of

Director of International Programs. She teaches courses related to primary eye care and ocular disease. In addition, she is involved with International program development for the college and serves on various international committees. Brava, Dr. Patel!

VOSH-ONE and currently she is serving as secretary of the VOSH-ONE Board.

Dr. Patel is a full-time faculty member at The New England College of Optometry and holds a rank of Associate Professor and

IMEC, VOSH-ONE, V/I move forward in getting equipment to needy countries Volunteers needed to help out at Andover facility

In addition to participating in missions, serving as president of VOSH-ONE and running marathons to raise funds for us, Dr. Derek Feifke has assisted our parent organization, VOSH/INTERNATIONAL, in securing a \$20,000 grant from the Esther B. Kahn Charitable Foundation. This funding has been earmarked to support VOSH's Technology Transfer project which is now underway as a collaborative effort with IMEC (International Medical Equipment Collaborative).

Fortunately for us, IMEC has a 400,000 square-foot storage facility in nearby North Andover, MA where they will store good, used medical equipment and then ship it to needy sites around the globe.

IMEC will ship individual pieces of equipment as requested, but the larger goal of this cooperative endeavor is to

be able to send complete eyecare suites (both primary care and surgical suites) to needy areas around the globe that are seeking to establish sustainable eyecare programs. Optometry schools that will benefit from this Technical Transfer Program are in Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Guyana and El Salvador. (See www.VOSH.org/technologytransferprogram126.html.)

We are excited about this collaboration because we feel that it has the potential of making the most long term impact on the local population. Already, through this VOSH/IMEC collaborative effort, equipment has been shipped to support the fledgling optometry school in Managua, Nicaragua.

Since its inception nearly two years ago, our own Dr. Harry Zeltzer has been the primary VOSH volunteer who's been

Please turn to page 5

VOSH-ONE is a chapter of VOSH/INTERNATIONAL. The organization is dedicated to the preservation of human sight, mainly in developing countries where there is no welfare system.

VOSH-ONE accomplishes its goals through its own missions or by assisting other groups with the same purpose.

VOSH-ONE BOARD

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From our VOSH-ONE president's desk...

by Derek Feifke, OD

As another year draws to a close it is fitting to reflect on the year past and anticipate the year ahead.

Our first appeal is to our membership. Please remember to renew your membership dues for 2009. Although VOSH-ONE is an entirely voluntary organization and missions are fully funded by mission participants, our ability to organize and create sustainable eye care in the poorest communities around the globe is one hundred percent dependent upon funding. It is with this in mind that we urge not only current members to renew but also all non-participating colleagues to consider becoming members of our wonderful organization.

In 2008, VOSH-ONE volunteers carried out missions to Blue fields and Ometepe, Nicaragua, Santa Ana and San Miguel, El Salvador, as well as the Bateyes in the Dominican Republic. Approximately 4,500 patients were examined by VOSH-ONE affiliates during 2008.

VOSH-ONE has several trips planned for 2009, including missions to El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Armenia.

Student VOSH participation at the



Dr. Feifke

New England College of Optometry continues to be very strong and now numbers over 200 active members. The future of VOSH volunteerism bodes well, as demonstrated by the enthusiasm and spirit of our young colleagues.

Please visit www.VOSH-ONE.org, our new web site. It contains information about the history of VOSH-ONE, previous and upcoming missions, as well as many past mission photographs. The site has chat rooms and your input is encouraged and welcome. You can even become a VOSH-ONE member online.

VOSH-ONE, with VOSH/INTERNATIONAL is now affiliated with IMEC (International Medical Equipment Collaborative). See www.IMECAMERICA.org. This Andover-based organization gathers and ships donated used medical equipment, including ophthalmic equipment to impoverished communities all over the world. If you have any surplus equipment in good, useable condition, please consider donating it to IMEC. Feel free to contact me at decabs@aol.com for inquiries.

Finally, I encourage any doctor who has not participated in an eye care mission or has not experienced the special feeling of making a difference in the life of someone who has no access to basic eye care or eyeglasses, to get involved in VOSH and share in this truly life-altering venture.

Dr. Feifke to run Boston for VOSH-ONE

He thought his running days were over, but now, after taking a couple of years off because of an injury, Dr. Derek Feifke will run the Boston Marathon once again in April, 2009.

He's repeating the challenge in order to raise funds for our Chapter, VOSH-ONE. Dr. Feifke qualified for a number in November at the Bay State Marathon with his best personal time to

date: 3 hours, 25 minutes.

While we may not be able to try the 26.2 mile run ourselves, let's all get behind Dr. Feifke's effort, follow his training, cheer him on at the Boston Marathon come April 19 and make a donation in his honor. To follow his efforts: go to www.VOSH-One.org and click on folder "Feifke runs Boston."

Please share this newsletter with your patients and friends. Encourage them to find out more by turning to www.VOSH-ONE.org and www.VOSH.org

Summary Report for VOSH mission 2008-San Pedro de Macoris, DR

By Amanda Jimenez,
President SVOSH-ONE 2007

On March 8, 2008, sixteen optometry students and four optometrists departed Boston for a ten-day mission trip to the Dominican Republic. As members of the VOSH program at the New England College of Optometry (NECO), these students volunteered countless hours fundraising and preparing for the long awaited trip abroad. Our destination was the Bateyes of San Pedro de Macoris to serve workers of the nearby sugarcane plantations who are in desperate need of health services.

The student VOSH program at NECO consists of about 75 active members ranging from first to third year optometry students. Each year, a group of third year students are selected based on prior service hours in fundraising, glasses organization, and community screenings. All members invited on the trip dedicate numerous hours volunteering their time in providing eye care to the greater Boston areas. SVOSH members participate in Lions Club screenings and monthly Sharewood Screenings among others. Additionally, students spend a significant amount of time raising money to pay for their expenses. Major fundraising events this year included the VOSH Grad School Mixer, Alcon Night, a 5K race, the VOSH walkathon, parking fundraisers and monthly bake sales.

Students work from first year to accumulate enough hours to be eligible for the trip in their third year. One second year student is selected as the president-elect and also invited to come on the trip. This year's group was under the direction of four optometrists: Dr. Bina Patel (Faculty Advisor), Dr. Michael Ruby, Dr. Andrew McLeod, and Dr. Jason Chin.

It was decided early last October that the group would again work in conjunction with the Batey Relief Alliance (BRA). This organization is under the

direction of Ulrick Gaillard, CEO and Founder of the BRA & Maria Virtudes Berroa, Executive Director.

The BRA is a non-profit organization established 10 years ago to help extinguish the disparities in healthcare & education present in the Bateyes of the Dominican Republic. There are around 20-30 Bateyes throughout the country and most families receive minimal if any health care at all. Many are of Haitian descent and work cutting sugar cane for very little money. Some even live without running water or electricity.



Examining a Haitian woman as her child looks on

The BRA helped organize the clinic site, gathered the patient base and they organized accommodations and internal ground transportation. SVOSH was responsible for flight arrangements and organizing our own eyeglasses, medicines, supplies, and equipment.

During our stay in the Dominican, we were assisted by Dr. Ana Celia

Carrero, a general practitioner and project coordinator for the BRA, and Cynthia So, a medical student working as a translator for our group. Dr. Carrero and Cynthia helped with patient flow, took brief case histories and measured blood pressures.

Our first stop was Barcelo Capella in San Pedro de Macoris, a beautiful beach resort about 30 minutes east of Santo Domingo. The Batey was about 30 minutes from the resort. The five clinic days proved to be challenging yet very rewarding. Our team saw about 1,450 patients ranging in age from less than a year old to 107 years old. People traveled from surrounding Bateyes to be seen, some arriving as early as 5:30 am in hopes of getting a ticket to gain entrance into the gate. Tents were set up outside as hundreds of people waited each day to be seen. Most

days the group worked tirelessly from about 9 am to 7 pm, breaking only for a quick lunch.



A typical home on one of the Bateyes in the DR

We encountered all types of refractive error. With our spectacle supply, we were able to provide prescription glasses in the form of single vision or bifocals to almost everyone.

Approximately 20 prescriptions will be specially made up in

Boston and then sent back. In addition, virtually every person received a pair of sunglasses to protect their eyes from the intense sunlight characteristic of that area.

Throughout the week, students encountered many clinical cases which are either rarely seen, or the extent of which is rarely seen in the United States.

A six-month to year-long supply of glaucoma drops was dispensed to every glaucoma patient. Referral services were also done for those people with dense cataracts, sight-threatening pterygia, or high blood pressure.

Students examined a group of about 15 children from a school for the deaf which proved to be a huge challenge. Despite language barriers, intense heat, and adverse examination conditions, the group was able to overcome these barriers and give the most appropriate care for each patient.

The student VOSH mission to the Dominican Republic 2008 was a great success. Despite conditions, we were able to provide quality eyecare to people in need and the clinical skills and knowledge gained in this setting will transcend into our professional careers. Each of us came away with a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction.

This trip touched all of our lives in different ways, yet one thing is certain; the experiences we had and memories we made in the Dominican Republic 2008 will be with us for a lifetime.

Ayudando y hablando espanol

By Joe Raczek, OD

For the last 4 years I've taken part in an annual VOSH-ONE eyecare trip to southern Nicaragua; every year I send a brief summary e-mail of our group's adventures and misadventures. So, here we go again.

This year, 4 optometrists, one med student functioning as an optometrist, one ophthalmologist, and one optician, along with about 10 support people, travelled together and did 4 days of clinics; one near San Juan del Sur and three on the island of Ometepe. While we are seeing some improvement in local living conditions, in the countryside where we do our clinics, nothing much has changed: still no eyecare, very little medical care, and no one has money for glasses or indeed, much of anything else.

Prison Recycling Project progresses

by Wendy Crusberg, SVOSH-ONE

For the past nine years, the Massachusetts Correctional Institution (MCI) in Norfolk, MA has been working in conjunction with VOSH-ONE and student VOSH volunteers from the New England College of Optometry to organize and neutralize donated used glasses for VOSH missions.

Prisoners are trained to do the tasks involved by area optometrists. Only glasses in good condition with no scratches are kept. Neutralized glasses are then placed in a plastic bag, labeled with the correct prescription and style. Next they are stored in boxes according to prescription and classification: single vision or bifocal (progressive lenses not used).

Previously, donations of used glasses were accepted at the New England College of Optometry, but due to space constraints, it is no longer possible.

Mike Devine, Director of Treatment at MCI Norfolk and the man in charge of

People waited in long lines for a rudimentary exam and to get glasses if needed. We provided over 1,400 exams. Almost all the disease we saw was not treatable as we had no surgical facilities, or the condition was chronic and needed followup.

On a personal note, every year I've gone, I've worked hard and always said that I'd love to just visit, study Spanish, vacation and not have to work so hard; that is precisely what I did earlier this year. I saw patients in the permanent clinic VOSH-ONE has set up in San Juan del Sur and I enrolled in a local Spanish school, studying from eight AM to noon daily. I'd like to think this will be especially useful for me in future years when we travel to rural clinics deep in the countryside where hardly any English is spoken.



Glasses recycled by inmates at MCI Norfolk in the dispensary of the VOSH clinic held at Bateyes in the Dominican Republic earlier this year

the VOSH-ONE glasses project at the prison, has graciously offered storage space at the prison for donated glasses. As a result, our SVOSH-ONE Chapter now has more sorted and labeled recycled glasses than what is needed for our own VOSH missions. We are happy to share the over-abundance of donated glasses with others in need of glasses for eye healthcare missions.

If you have amassed a number of used glasses and wish to donate them to this project, please contact Mike Devine at (508) 660-5900 ext. 254 or via e-mail at Michael.Devine@state.ma.us Used glasses donations are accepted via mail or via hand delivery to the prison. Mike Devine will provide details for where to mail glasses donations as well as where to drop them off if hand delivering.

VOSHers planning a mission and in need of recycled glasses, please contact either VOSH-ONE President Wendy Crusberg at wendy_crusberg@neco.edu or VOSH-ONE Glasses Coordinator Alia Khalaf at Alia_Khalaf@neco.edu.



Dr. James Fantazian has served on the two previous VOSH-ONE teams to Armenia.

VOSH-ONE to return to Armenia

By Linda Bennett, OD, Trip Leader

In October 2009, VOSH-ONE will make its third trip to Armenia. The current plan is to depart on October 9 and return on October 22. As in past trips, we are looking for at least eight optometrists and sixteen volunteers for the trip. We will hold clinics in small villages outside of Yerevan where the need for eye care is great. All patients are screened prior to our visit so only those with the greatest need are seen.

Our group will be housed in Yerevan which has changed in the past few years. The United States has located its second largest embassy in Yerevan which has led to much building. Our group will stay at the same government guest house that we have used in the past. It is centrally located so that in your free time, you can explore the city.

Our VOSH-ONE group works with AMARAS, a local volunteer group, which makes all arrangements with the Armenian government and provides us with Armenian volunteer translators. In the past, they have arranged for us to be hosted in local homes so that we can enjoy Armenian food and friendships. We will travel by bus to outlying villages and stop along the way to see interesting sights.

As we all know, the US dollar has lost its value in the last year. This year's trip is estimated to cost approximately \$2600. This will include airfare, accommodations, travel to the clinics, and most meals. There are very few flights to Yerevan. Therefore we must ask for \$1400 by December 30 to hold our Air France reservations. For more information, lbennettod@earthlink.net.

VOSH, IMEC collaborate to gather, distribute equipment and books

Continued from page 1
making weekly treks to the Andover facility. Happily, the program is rapidly growing, but this means that a lot more volunteers are needed to test, clean, approve, pack equipment, and, at times, make arrangements for minor repairs.

Since the initial appeal for additional volunteers to help out, Dr. Feifke and Dr. Janice Ewing have volunteered their time at the Andover site. Both agree that it is a

rewarding experience not to be missed.

More volunteers are desperately needed. Even if you never anticipate going on a VOSH trip, you can be of great service to us, simply by volunteering to help with this project, right here in Andover, be it weekly, monthly, or even for just one afternoon a year. Contact Dr. Zeltzer: harryizeltzer@comcast.net

There's yet another way you can assist with this joint VOSH/ IMEC project. Do

you – or someone you know - have good, used eyecare equipment you are no longer using, textbooks, blanks, frames, trail lens sets, hand-held instruments, etc.? If so, please donate the items to the IMEC/VOSH eyecare project.

Still have questions? Contact Dr.Zeltzer: harryizeltzer@comcast.net. Further information about this exciting endeavor can also be found at *VOSH-ONE.org* or, www.VOSH.org.

Successful IMEC collaboration brings about upgrades to Nicaraguan health center, hospital

By Macy Lawrence

VOSH-One /GHC volunteer

Several years ago, VOSH-ONE members Jay Jordan, OD, Chris Fields, OD, the New Hampshire Rotary and others, formed a separate non-profit organization to somehow get good, used medical and surgical equipment to third-world countries.

Our group began fundraising and forged a relationship with International Medical Equipment Collaborative (IMEC) which has since entered a further collaboration with VOSH-INTERNATIONAL to collect and distribute eyecare equipment to areas of dire need around the globe. (See above article that begins on page 1.)

Partnering with IMEC in 2006, we initially delivered \$400,000 in donated medical equipment and supplies to the Centro de Salud in San Juan del Sur (SJDS), Nicaragua. This was a logical site, as we became aware of the need in this area through Dr. Jordan's and Dr. Field's participation in VOSH eyecare missions here. Indeed, this shipment served to upgrade the quality and range of services provided by that local healthcare facility for the indigent.

In 2007 we shipped \$350,000 in beds and pediatric equipment to the hospital in Rivas, approximately two hours away from San Juan del Sur. An additional major shipment of operating room and critical care equipment valued by IMEC at \$750,000 was delivered in August, 2008.



Medical and surgical equipment in place at the hospital in Rivas, Nicaragua

The Rivas project was largely funded by a matching grant awarded by the Rotary International Foundation to the Woodstock, VT Rotary. Fourteen Rotary Chapters in District 7870 supported the effort.

Global Health Care's efforts at the SJDS Centro de Salud and the promise of additional equipment for Rivas encouraged SJDS Mayor Holmann and the then-director of the Rivas Hospital to apply to the national government for funds to improve the physical plant of the Rivas hospital.

Ultimately Rivas received over \$1 million for a new operating room wing for the hospital which was just completed in September.

In all, Global Health Care is responsible for shipping approximately \$1.5 million in equipment/supplies to Rivas over the past two years, with \$1.2 of it going to improve critical care at the hospital.

Special notes of appreciation

VOSH-ONE would like to thank accountant Gary Vostok of Clinton, MA who has donated his services for the document filings required to change our name from VOSH-NECO to VOSH-ONE. Your Board made the decision to make this name change in order to avoid confusion with the New England College of Optometry (NECO), which appropriated this acronym in 2007 to better reflect its organization.

We are grateful to Safilo USA which has generously underwritten the cost of setting up and maintaining our website for 2008. In addition, Safilo has donated 5,000 readers for use on VOSH-ONE eyecare clinics. Thank you, Safilo!

VOSH-ONE would also like to thank the donors who continue to make special contributions to the Armenian Eyeglass Fund. The team travels with a supply of glasses. However, some eyeglass prescriptions will have to be filled in Armenia by a local optician. Estimated need for funding for this project is \$2,500. Already, donations amounting to \$1,200 have been earmarked for the fall, 2009 Armenia eyecare clinic.

VOSH-ONE would also like to acknowledge a \$500 donation for 2008 from the New Hampshire Paraoptometric Society. Along with their financial support, we applaud their participation in eyecare teams.

Simmons College to honor Dra. Rosa Elena Bello

VOSHers take note! Plan on joining the festivities. Dra. Rosa Elena Bello, Director of the Centro de Salud in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, will travel to Boston to receive an honorary Doctoral degree from Simmons College in Boston, MA, during graduation ceremonies next June.

Volunteers who've been involved in providing eye-care, dental and medical care in this area of Nicaragua since our Chapter got underway in the mid-1990s know how dedicated Dra. Bello is to the people she serves and how instrumental she and her team of Brigadistas have been to the success of implementing healthcare and other related projects in this area.

VOSH-ONE

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity
of New England



Please join VOSH-ONE and help provide the gift of sight to needy individuals in other countries as well as within our own borders. All

members of VOSH-ONE are members of VOSH/INTERNATIONAL.

Whether you are interested in taking trips, making a donation, or have glasses and equipment to offer or just want to be informed of our projects, we value your support. We need you.

Annual dues, just

\$40

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

VOSH-ONE
Joe D'Amico, Treasurer
PO Box 41
Holden, MA 01520

Enclosed is an additional donation
of \$ _____

to further the work of **VOSH-ONE**.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Tel. () _____

e-mail _____

Please be sure your writing is legible and don't forget to let us know if your email address changes.



Clinical Director Dr. Rodney Gutner with NECO student Jen Salvo at Artesani Park, Brighton, MA

Students at NECO establish road race

On a bright, sunny afternoon on the first of November, student VOSH-ONE members of the New England College of Optometry (NECO), hosted their first annual "Eyes of the World 5K" in Artesani Park, Brighton, MA. Over seventy runners came out to support the event, helping SVOSH students raise just over \$1,200 towards financing their upcoming VOSH mission in April 2009. Encouraged by the success of this year's event, SVOSH members from the college are already looking to next year's race when they hope to increase participation by one hundred percent. Interested in joining them? Contact wendy_crusberg@neco.edu.

VOSH chapters, teams invited to submit sustainable proposals

Does your VOSH team have a long term project you'd like to implement in needy areas where you are working? Optometry Giving Sight (OGS) has invited VOSH chapters and/or teams to submit proposals for sustainable eyecare-related projects serving people in areas of great need around the globe. For further information contact Dr. Feifke, decabs@aol.com.

Remember to renew, and your e-mail address, please

VOSH-ONE would like to keep you abreast of our activities more frequently. Yet, in order to save money, we have been publishing just one newsletter annually (in early December). With rising mailing costs, we've also begun piggybacking our annual membership renewal dues request with the newsletter. You'll find your renewal form inserted into this newsletter. Please continue your support; a good number of you have neglected to include your e-mail address so we're unable to send you periodic updates of our activities, or even an e-copy of the VOSH/INTERNATIONAL newsletter

Our new website, www.VOSH-ONE.org is one great way for you to continue to keep abreast of some of the projects we are involved in. Please check the membership list that's posted there. If your e-mail address is not included, please take a few minutes to send it to our membership chairperson, Jennifer D'Amico, OD, at eyedoctim@aol.com. Thank you.

**Be sure to check our Chapter website:
www.VOSH-ONE.org
and the V/I website: www.VOSH.org
for more information, references, ideas, assistance,
or to read/post messages on the message board.**