

VOSH-ONE



Voluntary Optometric Services to Humanity – of New England

FALL

2014

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.



NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Karen L. Koumjian

Dear Members,

I hope everyone is well. VOSH-ONE has had another successful year of preserving human sight. This newsletter captures the year's highlights, especially VOSH-ONE's international (and local!) missions.

The VOSH International meeting will be on Sunday, November 16, 2014 at the Embassy Suites in downtown Denver, CO. In addition, all VOSH chapter presidents have been invited to the First Annual Presidents' Circle

Round Table Discussion and to the board meeting on Saturday, November 15, 2014. I will definitely attend and look forward to reporting back to you.

We have not scheduled continuing education for para-optometrists or technicians due to limited interest. However, if interest arises, we could certainly organize it. Essilor has graciously offered to provide and sponsor the continuing education so cost would not be of concern to VOSH. I would appreciate your feedback.

Finally, we need another volunteer to assemble the next newsletter. Please contact me if interested.

I look forward to working with you all for the remainder of the year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen Koumjian

VOSH-ONE President

2013-2015

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MONTHLY VOSH SCREENINGS IN WALTHAM BY KEVIN CORNWELL

It was the spring of 2013 and we had just returned from humanitarian eye care trips. I had gone to Belize through the New England College of Optometry and my roommate, Josh Froemming, had gone to Ghana with Unite for Sight. Upon returning, we were both eager to start a local volunteer-based vision screening and eye care clinic.

We began by contacting local homeless shelters, veterans' shelters, and soup kitchens. After several months, the stars aligned and we discovered a free medical clinic open Monday evenings at the Methodist Church on Moody Street in downtown Waltham. Although medical doctors at the clinic performed physical and health screenings, they did not provide patients with eye care or glasses. The clinic needed optometrists.

In August 2013 Josh, Dr. Lerner, and I held the first vision screening at the clinic. Josh and I had assembled a team of optometrists that included Dr. Lee Lerner, who happens to have an optometry practice four blocks away from the church, Dr. Kristin White (the past SVOSH-NECO president), and optometry students. We brought an autorefractor, non-contact tonometer, ophthalmoscopes, occluders, snellen acuity charts, and a large assortment of over-the-counter reading glasses. Between three and eight patients visit the clinic on Mondays.

Not only do they receive eye care and glasses, they also gain access to the Massachusetts health care system. We work together to provide patients with information on how they can obtain health insurance,

regardless of their income or social status. This is important, especially when our vision screenings warrant a referral to another health care provider.

It has been one year since the launch of the screenings and we have enhanced the patient care that we bring to them. We have been collaborating with the New England College of Optometry to acquire more equipment, such as a full-size slit lamp and more handheld equipment. We hope that student volunteers from a greater variety of medical professions, such as dentistry and physician assistants, will join our medical team.

Although there is plenty of room for improvement, these screenings have helped Waltham locals receive the eye care or healthcare referrals they need. Fortunately, volunteering at the clinic has become a requirement for students seeking to participate in the annual SVOSH NECO trip. Hopefully the Waltham clinic will mark the start of many more sustainable student-service opportunities within the Greater Boston area. While international service is important, we must not forget about helping our neighbors here as well. ❖



YOUR 2015 OPPORTUNITIES

China

Stay tuned for more trips in
the next newsletter!

Reminder: Annual dues, \$40

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

Please mail in your check to:

VOSH-ONE Treasurer
Dr. Andrea Murphy
P.O. Box 371
Grantham, NH 03753



GREAT MISSION OPPORTUNITY: CHINA!

Interested in joining or sending a group to Shanxi Province, China? There are five orphanages within a few hours drive of each other. It would be coordinated through the Cradle of Hope Adoption Agency in Silver Spring, Maryland. It would be no problem for the agency to manage the logistics for the trip including visas, ground transportation, sightseeing programs, hotel, food, translators, clinic facilities, patient outreach, etc.

The VOSH group would fly into Beijing (and perhaps do some sightseeing) and then take a three-hour trip on a high-speed train to Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province.

The agency is hoping to organize a trip for April or May 2015. Please see the email forwarded to you and let Dr. Koumjian know if there is interest. She would need one person to be the coordinator with Mary Chamberlain of the Cradle of Hope Adopting agency.

VOLUNTEERING IN MAINE

BY WENDY CRUSBERG, OD



This year I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in a One Sight clinic. This was the first One Sight mission I had ever been on, and I have to say that I could not have been more impressed. For those of you who are not familiar with One Sight, it is a vision related non-profit organization funded by Luxottica (www.onesight.org). One Sight has retrofitted buses that are driven all over the US to provide eye care where there is need. The buses are fully equipped with exam lanes complete with phoropters, slit lamps, back-lit acuity charts, autorefractors, non-contact tonometers, and a full optical dispensary and lab with a large selection of stylish frames and an edger to make glasses on site. It was truly pampered volunteering! A far stretch from setting up hand-held equipment in dark shanties without electricity – the norm for many foreign missions!

I was only able to participate in one day of the week long One Sight clinic to different locations in the Portland area. The day that I participated, the bus, “Eyeleen,” was stationed in Biddeford, Maine. So many volunteers were present, some local and some from half way across the country. Prior to the arrival of “Eyeleen,” kids from local schools had been pre-screened for financial need and visual problems. Upon arrival of the volunteers, those kids who were deemed in need were waiting and ready to be examined.

Paul Craven, the Lab Manager at the South Portland LensCrafters, was the local clinic coordinator. He did a fantastic job! Local doctors who participated in the clinic in addition to myself were doctors Mary Ellen Connell and Rachel Nadeau of Family Eye Care in Saco, Maine, Tony Fusco of the LensCrafters in Manchester, New Hampshire, James “Pat” Smith of the Togus VA Medical Center in Augusta, Maine, Tim Kearins and Steve Goldstein of Casco Bay Eyecare in Portland, Maine, Roger Gagnon of Maine Mall Eye Care in South Portland, Maine, and Lauren Boutet of Beacon Eye Care in Biddeford, Maine. Other volunteers included opticians, optical managers, and even volunteers from insurance companies.

Over the course of the week approximately 300 kids were examined and thanks to One Sight all those in need of glasses were given glasses free of charge. Amazingly over 70% of kids who needed glasses received them on the same day!

I look forward to the next time One Sight organizes a clinic in New England and hope to have the opportunity to participate again. For more information on this clinic please visit the wonderful blog that Joe Cummings, Director of Ecommerce and Omnichannel for Target Optical and One Sight volunteer, put together at <http://www.luxottica.com/en/onesight/get-inspired/2014-portland-blog>

VOSH INTERNATIONAL MISSION TO THE PHILIPPINES

BY SHIRLIE DOWD, OD

On November 8th, 2013 super typhoon Haiyan (locally called Yolanda) ravished the Philippines, leaving a trail of total devastation on the islands of Leyte and Samar. VOSH International knew that they needed to do something to help and they knew just the right people to call: Marina and Derrick March. Marina is a Canadian Philippino optometrist out of Vancouver. She and her husband Derrick have organized dozens of missions over the last 20 years all over the world through their organization TWECS (Third World Eye Care Society). They have also been to the Philippines twice and once to the city of Tacloban, one of the hardest hit cities on the island of Leyte. When VOSH International contacted them, they were on a mission trip to Ecuador. It would be nearly impossible to finish one mission and then get a supply of glasses and plan another trip in just a few months, but they knew they had to try. They put the word out through VOSH International and started to vet and assemble a group of 18 doctors and support staff that wouldn't mind long days, tent living and possibly having to bring all their own food and supplies, as they didn't know what to expect in a disaster area.



Tacloban had 90% of its structures destroyed or damaged both by the 230mph winds and the 18 ft storm surge that overcame the city of 200,000 people. We arrived on January 22, two and a half months after the typhoon. We set up clinic for the first six days in the devastated city hospital. We did a screening for 500 school children on the seventh day and then did three days of clinic each in the towns of Tanauan and Besay respectively. We found a gracious, joyful, resilient population that was stunned by all that had happened. In a part of the world that gets 20+ typhoons a year, this was like no other. They all had the same thing to say, they lost their homes and all their belongings and some lost part of their families but they didn't lose their spirit. This resounded in every smile and wave that we received on this trip, of which there were many.



In our thirteen consecutive days of clinic we were able to see 8,100 patients and dispense at least that many glasses. Usually on VOSH trips we see the very poorest of people that don't have the means to purchase eyewear, in this mission we saw a cross section of the socioeconomic population because there is no where to get glasses even if you have the money. One man called it the "great equalizer" because whether you were rich or poor, everyone now has nothing. It was inspirational to see the resilience of a population that is struggling to meet the very basic needs of food and water on a daily basis. I have no doubt that they will live up to all their motivations signs of Bangon (rise up) Tacloban! ❖



VOSH-ONE MISSION TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY DEREK FEIFKE, OD



This was my third trip to Constanza in the beautiful North Western mountains of the Dominican Republic. I accompanied a Medical team from the South Shore Hospital, South Weymouth, Mass, which included three medical doctors, a Pediatric nurse practitioner, nurses, assistants as well as in country Peace Corp volunteers. As the only optometrist, I was fortunate to have the help of optometric technician and aspiring OD, Matt Bruns.

We were officially welcomed at the Sunday morning Church Service, followed by the perfunctory Sunday tour of The Constanza Hospital. The hospital appears to be better equipped and more efficiently run than on previous visits. The improvements in care at the hospital are quite tangible, as a result of recent equipment donations and upgrades. Accommodations were comfortable as always at Hotel Constanza and we were well fed for the duration of the trip by the Sisters at the local Convent.

We held clinics over four days in the outlying villages and districts. The clinics were set up in such a way, that patients were first triaged and then directed to the appropriate medical station. There was a high demand for eye care as expected. A second OD would have made a significant difference to the total number of patients who needed eye examinations.

I examined a total of 165 patients over 4 days of clinics. We dispensed 139 pairs of plus prescriptions, 15 minus prescriptions and numerous sunglasses. 10 pairs of high minus astigmatic glasses and bifocals will be made up by my lens lab and shipped down to Constanza. One surprising anecdote on this trip was that the vast majority of astigmatic refractive errors were against the rule.

Pathologies encountered on this trip included glaucoma, chemically scarred corneas (primarily from insecticide exposure), cataracts, pterygia, keratoconus, and foreign bodies. I have 12 patients from this trip who along with 35 others from previous missions who are awaiting cataract extractions. We are anticipating that an ophthalmologist will be going down to the area in January 2015 to perform the necessary surgeries.

All in all it was another productive mission. The trip would be better served by more than one OD and hopefully this can be addressed on future trips. I look forward to the Ophthalmologist taking care of our awaiting cataract patients in January. ❖

VOSH-ONE MISSION TO NICARAGUA

BY JOE D'AMICO, OD



Left: Volunteers
in Nicaragua (Dr.
D'Amico in
center)



Right: Dr. Karen
Koumjian and
Tamara Granner,
NECO first-year
student

Granada is not as needy as some of the towns in Nicaragua we have been to in the past. We lived in a comfortable hotel, had good restaurants and lovely vistas and interesting travel. Nicaragua is changing for the better. There is a new road almost completed between Managua and Granada. The road to San Carlos from Managua is completed. You can see signs of change, more automobiles, locals enjoying an evening out, kids with good bicycles. While I'm happy for the people, I miss the quiet of the Nicaragua in the past.

Our group was a small part of Rodolfo Vargas M.D.'s (Friends of Rudy) Alabama Clinic in Granada. Rudy is a warm, helpful Endocrinologist from Granada who practices in Birmingham, Alabama. He can get things into Nicaragua. I stopped going to Nicaragua because, like others in VOSH, I have not been able to get the glasses, drugs, and equipment into the country.

We had 3 O.D.'s, Karen Koumjian (VOSH/ONE president), Lucie Berthaiume (an OD from Ottawa and the mother of one of the students), and myself. A Nicaragua trained optometrist, Grace, worked with us and Jay Jordan O.D. was in country and worked 1 day. The group also included Elise Berthaiume, Aimee Mesenberg (both second year students at NECO), Tamara Ganner and Thu Nguyen (both first year students at NECO). Judith West and my wife of 50 years, Zabelle, did dispensing, frame selection and bifocal measurements.

We attended to 775 people. I have 39 pairs of glasses to make up here and will return them to the Alabama clinic in Granada when completed. I was impressed with the NECO students. They were able to help and worked well together. I know I would not have been able to do what they were doing when I was in school. Their talent speaks well for the school as it exists today. Our group worked well together. We attended one of the interpreter's English classes and were impressed with the number of students looking to get better jobs by learning English.

I would love to do a clinic in San Carlos and the Rio San Juan now that the road is completed. The driver we used said it takes four and a half hours to get from Managua to San Carlos. I'll miss the small plane, but now we can take a minibus upon arriving at the airport and travel directly to San Carlos and not need to wait until the next morning to catch the flight. ❖

TOYS FOR DOMINICAN CHILDREN BY JENNIFER WILLIAMS



Left: Toy target use (Dominican patient and Abby Tang)

Right: Toy pick up (L to R, Jen Williams, Christian Brown, Amy Burke)



Each year Student Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (SVOSH) from the New England College of Optometry (NECO) take a service trip with third year students and several optometrists to an impoverished country; for the past several years, the trip has been to the Dominican Republic. The group is able to provide eye care to those less fortunate in these foreign communities. Many optometric supplies are carried on this trip including corrective spectacles, sunglasses, eye drops and the like. During the past two service trips, the group has been able to bring along some extra supplies that have proven to be quite useful - those extra supplies being toys!

A 12 year old boy scout named Christian Brown has made this all possible. Christian grew up with some ocular issues of his own, receiving treatment from Dr. Anna Maria Baglieri out of Boston Children's Hospital. Christian's visual problems as a child have made him a very empathetic person toward others with vision issues. Dr. Baglieri told Christian about the SVOSH trips and he wanted to find a way to give back and help out. His solution was to encourage his boy scout troop and school (St. John's in Beverly, MA) to donate toys that the doctors and students could bring on the service trips. It should be noted that all toys were donated and no purchases were necessary for the toy drives. These toys are used as targets during eye examinations and distributed to all of the children who come to the clinic.

Christian organizes the toy collections with his school and troop, and arranges pick up/drop offs with the SVOSH executive team at the New England College of Optometry. Those participating in the toy drive were notified that small toys and stuffed animals were preferred for packing purposes. Over the past three years, SVOSH has been able to bring more than enough toys on each trip. Many children receive glasses on these trips, but all children receive toys, which is something that would not be possible without the generosity of Christian. The most amazing part of this story is that Christian began this toy donation process at the age of 8 and took the initiative all on his own! Even before this project, Christian has felt compelled to give back and has participated in Operation Smile, during which he set out to raise \$250 and actually raised over \$2,500. SVOSH-NECO owes Christian Brown a huge thank you for all of his help; his community service drive is exceptional and there is no doubt that he will positively affect the lives of many people both locally and abroad! ❖

Thank you Christian and St. John's of Beverly! For any additional information on the toy donation process, please contact Michelle Brown by phone at (978) 790-5444 or by email at myameen102@comcast.net.