

February 2018

VOSH-ONE



Voluntary Optometric Services to
Humanity – of New England

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/International Annual Meeting 2017

By VOSH-ONE President, Jenifer Ambler

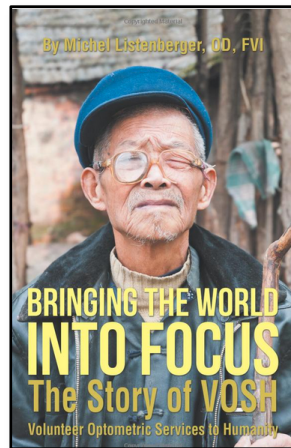
Bina Patel, Jen Hyde, and I attended the VOSH/International Annual Meeting October 13-14, 2017, in Chicago. The meeting opened on Friday the 13th with the V/I Board meeting. Thirty people attended, including board members, committee members, and other interested parties. I am a new board member, Bina Patel is a current board member, and Jen Hyde is the exhibits committee chair. During the meeting, a new book was introduced, *Bringing the World into Focus, the Story of VOSH*, by Michael Listenberger.

Reports were presented from SVOSH, committees, and chapters, plus finances and statistics. VOSH Interns and VOSH

Corps were represented, and a report was given on the damage to clinics in the wake of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Walter Johnson from Project CURE, the largest shipper of containers of donated medical equipment around the world, spoke. There may be possibility of collaboration with Project Cure in the future for VOSH supplies and equipment that needs to be shipped overseas. A fascinating guest speaker came (with seeing eye dog) from Second Sense, a provider of low-vision resources. The day ended with a SVOSH reception.

On Saturday, outgoing V/I President

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please consider attending the next **VOSH Annual Meeting in Montreal, Canada** on October 12-14, 2018. The theme of this year's meeting is "United VOSH," and it will be hosted by one of the most active VOSH Chapters, VOSH-Santa Cruz (Montreal). It promises to be more chapter-centric this year, with a major focus on what VOSH chapters want and how to accomplish that. All members are encouraged to come! See <http://vosh.org/annual-meetings/vosh-annual-meeting-2018>

Help support VOSH-ONE.

Help support our cause in bringing eye care to people in underprivileged countries around the world by donating or by becoming a member of VOSH-ONE today.
Membership dues:
\$40 per year
(\$5 per year for students)
Being a member does not obligate you to go on missions, we feel that is a personal choice.
VOSH-ONE is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, making your dues and donations tax deductible.

Donations of any size are much appreciated.

Clinics

The VOSH International website lists dozens of clinics scheduled throughout 2018. If your New Year's Resolution is to volunteer for a service trip, visit the website for a list of opportunities.

<http://vosh.org/get-involved/clinics-by-date/>

The **Worcester Evening Free Medical Program** was founded 20 years ago to provide medical services to people in need in the local community. Included in this is a hearing and eye division that provides free eye exams and low cost eyeglasses. The organization is in need of a few optometrists who can volunteer to do 6 to 8 exams, just a few times a year. The program is located at the Wesley Methodist Church at Lincoln Square and operates on Monday evening from 6 to 8 pm. For more information, please call Ron Ramsey at 774-287-9002. Your help would be greatly appreciated!

Reminder: Annual dues, \$40

Please join VOSH-ONE and help provide the gift of sight to needy individuals in other countries or within our own borders. Membership dues can be paid online at:

<http://www.vosh-one.org/donations-or-become-a-member.php>

or mail your check to:
VOSH-ONE Treasurer
Dr. Andrea Murphy
P.O. Box 371
Grantham, NH 03753

VOSH Trip to Granada, Nicaragua

February 3-14th, 2017

by Joe D'Amico, O.D.

Granada is more prosperous than some of the towns in Nicaragua we have been to in the past. We lived in a comfortable hotel, ate in good restaurants, and enjoyed lovely vistas and interesting travel. Nicaragua is changing for the better. There is a new road between Managua and Granada, and the road to San Carlos from Managua is completed. You can see many 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 old Nicaragua.

This year's team included 3 ODs: Derek Feifke, Karen Koumjian, and myself; 5 third-year students from the New England College of Optometry: Rachel Kormos, Alexandra Gutierrez, Hannah Garlick, Michael Miller, and Daniel O'Dowd; 1 first-year student, also from NECO: Azalea Garcia. Anne May and Ben Feifke rounded out the team. Roger Barrios, Nicaraguan with his truck, did some transportation and whatever we needed.

We examined 693 people:

- 403 needed reading glasses (which we delivered at the time of the exam)
- 121 did not need any glasses



Ben Feifke (right) in the dispensary

- 53 people were myopic (we were able to give 28 glasses from our selection, the others will be made in the US and shipped back)
- 116 people needed bifocals (we had 98 pairs that fit the need; the rest will be made at home and sent back.)

I was impressed with the NECO students. They were wonderful with patients, totally interested in the clinic and worked well together.

The glasses needed for Granada patients were made by Jay Jordan and he brought them to the clinic in Granada.

Most of our team left at the end of the week. However, Jay Jordan, O.D., came on board so our

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Nicaragua

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team now included two optometrists, Jay and myself. Anne May handled arrangements for this segment of our trip. It included a day at La Paz, a rural farming cooperative and a second day at a women's shelter located at the dump in Managua for coffee farmers who were demonstrating against chemicals sprayed on coffee plants that caused farmers to break out in sores.

On our final day in the Nicaragua we held a clinic at the Mustard Seed Orphanage, which I had arranged prior to our trip. We saw 100 people in La Paz, another



100 at the women's cooperative, and 18 seriously handicapped children along with 18 members of the staff at the orphanage.



Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity -New England Chapter

VOSH is an international organization of dedicated volunteers whose purpose is to eliminate preventable blindness and to assist those who cannot obtain or afford vision care both in the USA and in underdeveloped countries around the globe. Our services include eye exams, glasses, and medications. When possible, we also facilitate donations of equipment and textbooks to fledgling optometry schools and help establish and support permanent eye care programs run by local populations.

The vision for Volunteers in Optometric Service to Humanity (VOSH), originated with Kansas Optometrist Franklin Harms, OD, in 1972. Today, VOSH/INTERNATIONAL has 35 regional Chapters and 25 student Chapters around the globe, including our own New England Chapter, VOSH-ONE .

VOSH-ONE (Volunteers in Optometric Service to Humanity of New England) got underway in 1998 when Joe D'Amico, OD, Lee Lerner, OD, the late Phil Richmond, OD, and Harry Zeltzer, OD, formed VOSH-NECO (Volunteers in Optometric Service to New England), with board representation from the 6

New England states. In addition to a cadre of dedicated optometrists, VOSH volunteers today include ophthalmologists, medical personnel and trained lay personnel. Volunteers have no political or religious agenda, but we do sometimes work with religious or government groups that are committed to tolerance.

VOSH volunteers pay their own way when going on trips. Their reward is the satisfaction derived from helping others. The experience is so self-rewarding that many volunteer year after year. VOSH-ONE is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization so all donations are tax-deductible.

SVOSH-NECO Trip to Dominican Republic

April 2017

By Natalie Wu, SVOSH President

March 31-April 7, 24 third-year students and 4 ODs from the New England College of Optometry embarked on our annual VOSH clinic trip to the Dominican Republic. We arrived at the Santo Domingo airport early in the morning (after a 3-hour delay on our red-eye flight), were greeted by our host Maria from the Batey Relief Alliance (BRA), and taken to our hotel in Boca Chica. Once settled into our hotel, we were driven an hour outside of Boca Chica to the Gildan Factory where we would be working. We spent the rest of the day setting up our clinic, unloading crates of glasses, putting up visual acuity charts, and setting up BIOs in the dark room that Gildan had built for us. After a long first day, we headed back to our hotel to finally get some rest!

We got up the next morning, loaded back onto the bus, and drove to Gildan. We were greeted by the director of Gildan and some officials from the BRA, had our pictures taken, and then headed inside to get to work. Each student was assigned a station for each day of clinic (refraction, entrance testing, dilation, or dispensary). Our 4 days of clinic went amazingly smooth, and this was largely in part due to the



exceptional organization of Maria, the BRA, and Gildan. They had preemptively gone and handed out tickets to people living in the Batey, so instead of people pushing and

shoving to get an eye exam, they knew which day to come. This allowed us to focus on eye exams instead of crowd control.

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SVOSH-NECO Dominican Republic

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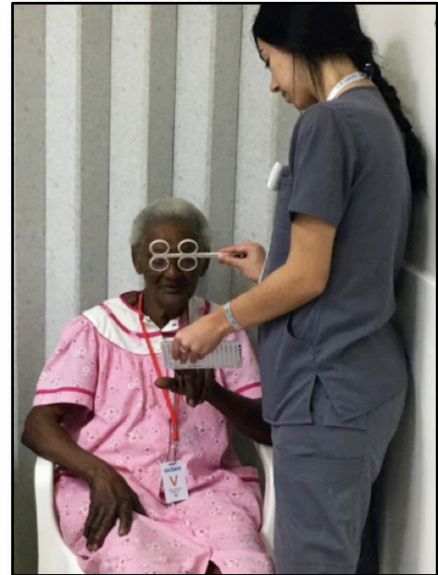
This trip was an amazing experience in so many ways. The sheer volume of patients that we were able to see allowed us as optometry students to improve our skills in a short period of time, and we were exposed to diseases that we would have a low chance of seeing in the US. Being able to practice our Spanish also helped many of us improve our communication with our Spanish-speaking patients when we returned to Boston.

For many of us, it was our first time to the Dominican Republic, and on our last day, we had a chance to explore Boca Chica or relax on the beach after a busy 4 days of clinic. The culture, food, and kindness of the people are things we will all remember for a long time.

I'm sure if you ask any of the students who went on the trip, each person would tell you about a different moment that stood out to them, but I think we can all agree that this was a trip we will never forget.

We were able to see over 800 patients, and we dispensed hundreds of pairs of glasses, readers, and sunglasses. We were

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“Sight and Bite” Trip to El Salvador a Success

October 28 to November 4, 2017

by Jenifer Ambler, OD

From October 28 to November 4, 2017, eight volunteers traveled to San Jose Villanueva in El Salvador for a combined optometric and dental trip. Ed Warren, OD, Jane Pentheny, OD, and Jenifer Ambler, OD were the optometrists. Two dentists, a dental hygienist, and 2 lay volunteers also worked in the group. On site, we were joined by two Salvadoran dentists volunteering their time.

We were hosted by Epilogos, a nonprofit with offices in New Hampshire and El Salvador, which made all the arrangements for transportation, clinic space, rooms and meals, translators, and local helpers. The brand new Clinica Municipal was downright luxurious compared to other sites in past years!

We provided care for approximately 250 patients who received services including eye exams, eyeglasses, sunglasses, dental cleanings, fillings, and extractions.



Jane Pentheny, OD examining a patient with the help of a translator.

Several patients were referred for specialty care such as cataract surgery.

On days off, we visited schools (including end-of-year celebrations) and homes being

constructed by volunteers (including the party celebrating completion of a home), and held meetings concerning the state of education, health care, poverty, gangs, drugs in the country.



After!



The waiting room

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Sight and Bite

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Some statistics

Optometrists:

Ed Warren, OD, Jenifer Ambler, OD, Jane Pentheny, OD

Patients seen: 170

Referrals for cataract: 14

Eye glasses and sunglasses provided for almost all patients, with many people receiving multiple pairs of glasses (prescription glasses, readers and/or sunglasses)

Approximate value of services provided: \$29,000

Dental providers: Dave Gordon, DMD, Ray Phelan, DMD, Brooke Finnell, RDH, Dr. Daniel Martinez Serrano, and Dra. Jessica Martinez Serrano

Patients seen: 64

Prophylaxis: 26

Fillings: 50

Extractions: 12

Approximate value of services provided: \$16,250



Brooke Finnell, hygienist and dental clinic organizer



Acuity testing with trial frame



Ed Warren, OD setting up the exam room

Sight and Bite

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Assisting in the clinic is sometimes a family affair



Ed Warren, OD, dentists Ray Phelan and Dave Gordon, Epilogos founder Mike Jenkins. The clinic was hosted and coordinated by Epilogos, a nonprofit with offices in New Hampshire and El Salvador, which focuses on education, economic and social development in San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador.



How many dentists does it take to repair dental equipment?



Maybe reading the manual will help

Achromatopsia in Pingelap

By Jennifer Hyde

While I was at the VOSH International Annual Meeting in Chicago this fall, I had the good fortune to meet Sandra Wang Harris, OD MPH. Sandra lives in Pohnei, Micronesia, an island in the South Pacific, and works with a visually impaired community from the tiny atoll of Pingelap.

Pingelap is exceptionally isolated. It is located 170 miles from Pohnei (pop: 500,000) effectively cutting off the tiny population from the rest of the world. The minute population of 250 people does not have viable access to the outside world as flights are prohibitively expensive for the impoverished population. It takes several days by boat to reach Pohnei. Provision of basic services--clean water, food, medical care, education--is a challenge. Fishing remains the primary livelihood on the island.

In addition to the hardships of being geographically isolated, approximately 10% of the population is afflicted with achromatopsia or complete color blindness. Typical rates of achromatopsia are about one in 3000. Achromatopsia is a genetic disease that causes a complete inability to distinguish colors, but also severe light sensitivity. Achromats must wear dark tinted lenses out of doors, and sometimes even inside as well. Achromatopsia can impede one's ability to read. In a tropical environment where much of life is spent out of doors, achromatopsia presents a real hardship.

Additionally, there is a social component to this disease as well. Achromats are often distinguishable by constant blinking and squinting. Because their visual acuity changes throughout the day due to

variable light conditions, they experience a variety of low visibility challenges throughout the day. Often their preference is to conduct their daily activities at night, when lighting conditions are more comfortable to

the light sensitive. Some Pingelap fishermen who are achromats, have learned to fish at night.

The story of how so much achromatopsia came to be in Pingelap is an interesting one. In the late eighteenth century a typhoon wiped out most of the population of Pingelap, leaving just 20 survivors. Among those 20 was the leader, Nahmwarki

Mwanenised. Unbeknownst to him, he was the carrier of a gene, CNGB3, which causes rod monochromatism. It is believed that the genetic mutation was brought to the island by a stranded Irish sailor. Because CNGB3 is recessive, it took four generations for achromatopsia to emerge in the population.



Achromatopsia can impede one's ability to read.



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Pingelap

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Now achromatopsia is firmly established in the population. But due to their isolation and poverty, the achromats of Pingelap cannot benefit as readily from low-vision aides (specialized contacts, lens, magnification devices) and rehabilitation.

Dr. Harris helps mostly in a non-official capacity in eye care development and general public health. She volunteers at the Pohnpei State Hospital whenever needed and has been working with the Mahi Foundation International in establishing a more sustainable eye health program in the country of Micronesia. Dr. Harris also works with the Pingelapese to produce beautiful and unique



baskets and handicrafts. In this way, she helps them earn a livelihood and raise funds to purchase vision aides and eye care services.

Dr. Sandra Wang-Harris can be reached with questions or orders of Pingelap crafts at: sandrawangharris@gmail.com.



Baskets and jewelry hand-crafted in Pingelap

SVOSH-NECO Dominican Republic

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also able to provide eye drops for people who needed them.

Gildan was nothing short of amazing—not only providing us with comfortable working conditions but also with food and water to sustain us throughout the day. We couldn't have done this without all of their help and we are

so grateful for their generosity and kindness. We also received many generous donations from various businesses and individual donors, and tons of glasses donations from the Boston Lions Clubs.

Huge thank yous also go out to Dr. Jeff Ho, Dr. Nicole Theiss, and Dr. Jameel Kanji who volunteered time out of their busy schedules to come on the trip. And of course, this trip would not have been possible without the incredible longstanding dedication of Dr. Bina Patel.



V/I Annual Meeting 2017

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Ellen Weiss, OD, FVI, welcomed participants and speakers. Greg Pearl, OD, introduced Renata Martinez of FUDEM in El Salvador, which hosts many eye clinics with and without international participants and would always like more ODs. Bob Corlew, Immediate Past President of the Lions Clubs highlighted “Fifty Years of Saving Sight” www.lcif.org.

VOSH Corps participants Bob and Kim Molter talked about teaching optometry in Vietnam. Dr. Asa Morton of HELPS International discussed collaboration between ODs and Ophthalmologists. The keynote speaker was Jerry Vincent, OD, MPH, FAAO.

The Humanitarian of the Year Award was given to Sandra Bury, OD, and the Harry I. Zeltzer Lifetime Achievement Award was given to C. Ellis Potter, OD, FAAO, FVI. To learn more about Ellis’s exemplary work for VOSH and dedication to helping the world’s poor to see please see: <http://vosh.org/ellis-potter-honored-with-2017-humanitarian-awards/>

The presidency of V/I was passed on from Ellen Weiss, OD, FVI to Tracy Matchinski, OD, FAAO, FVI for the coming two years. A highlight throughout the meeting was a series of videos produced by SVOSH chapters; lots of impressive talent and creativity!

Break-out sessions included:

- A new Essilor product called Ready 2 Clip. This kit of ready-made mix-and-match frames and lenses was tested on a clinic trip and feedback

obtained on its pros and cons. One advantage is being able to fit the proper prescription to a patient, but there were concerns about quality. The overall cost is about \$4-5/pr.

- Collaboration possibilities with ophthalmology groups through HELPS International and SEE (Surgical Eye Expeditions International). ODs go with HELPS groups doing pre-op and post-op care. ODs go a few weeks before a SEE group and refer surgical candidates to SEE.

- New ideas for streamlining spectacle dispensing and inventory.
- Loaner equipment programs for VOSH and SVOSH.

The next VOSH/International meeting is planned for October 12-14, 2018 in Montreal...within driving distance for VOSH-ONE members!