

## Deposit Used Eye Glasses

A few months back, our VOSH work shop experienced a situation I've rarely seen in the 25 years I have been involved with the organization.....we were running low of raw stock. Raw stock for those who are reading this without understanding the inter workings of our work shops, are the glasses. As well as glasses case's, the occasional false teeth, and even hearing aids that are donated to us! Once I even found someone's love letter in a donated box of glasses! It's amazing what people throw in the boxes.

The lack of glasses could be the result of two of our VOSH members (Joni and Jerry Arvidson) retiring from VOSH and their used eye wear supplier contact who also retired at the same time. The new person who took over the position...I was told, now sends their collected eye wear elsewhere.

It may also be due to the recession and people may be hanging onto their glasses longer. What ever the reason(s), it brought up a concern about the reduction of donated eye wear for future VOSH trips. We did recently receive a donation of glasses that were sitting in the armory in Mankato, MN. VOSH'er Glenn Schultz picked them up and delivered a number of boxes to Dr. Hess' office. BIG THANKS to Glenn!

I'm sure most optometric offices have used eyewear deposit boxes of sorts supplied by civic clubs or churches. I have helped VOSH-MN design an attractive full color "DEPOSIT USED EYE GLASSES HERE" box to be given free of charge to all optometric offices or businesses. There are instructions with each box and once it is full, it simply is shipped via UPS to the self addressed label and we will send a new one to that office/business!

With absolutely no disrespect to any other organization collecting used eyewear, God only knows the desperate need around the world but the question has always been "Where does the donated eye wear go?" Over the years, I have heard some unsettling stories from people with good intentions as to where their collected eyewear ends up. "Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity" is optometric based and therefore we know what prescriptions and frames are usable in the field. If you want your collection of used eyewear to be used properly and given to people in need -- (examined by a professional Doctor of Optometry and fitted by experienced Opticians and volunteers) -- then donate your used glasses to VOSH!

We introduced the new box program at the Minnesota Optometric Association Annual Conference on February 5th and it was an outstanding success! The exhibit hall was only open for four hours but we managed to hand out fifty-one of the new boxes! Long time VOSH member, Nancy Friberg, has also volunteered to carry some boxes in her car and hand them out to offices on her optometric sales route. Thanks Nancy!

JOHNSON EYE CLINIC in Worthington, MN has the honor to be the very first office to send back a full box of used eyewear in our designer box! A great big "Thank You" from VOSH! If you did not have the opportunity to pick up a new VOSH box or know of a business or location that would gladly collect eyewear please email me; Kirk Thomas -- [holeintheday@hotmail.com](mailto:holeintheday@hotmail.com) and I will send you one or two -- just ask!

In these times of uncertainties here at home and world wide, thank you very much for realizing there's still a huge need in what we do! VOSH provides new awakenings in people's lives through clear vision. **Kirk Thomas VP/Treasurer**

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## Previous Missions

### Montero Peru

Senior! Senior! I felt a hand on my shoulder as I was assisting a young lady find a pair of glasses. I turned around and saw an older Peruvian lady looking at me with a huge smile on her face. She was less than 4' tall and it was clear from her rugged face she was at least 60 years old. Her cotton dress was well pressed and I was sure she was wearing her very best outfit. I remembered that I had fitted glasses on her the day before. She held out 2 of the largest avocados I have ever seen. She said in Spanish, "for you Senior, thank you for the glasses. I am now able to sew and cook and read the newspaper with my new glasses". I took the avocados and gave her a few coins in payment. We took a picture together and she turned and left our clinic. Somehow I knew we would never forget each other.

This is just one of the memorable moments for me as I was working with a VOSH-MN team in Montero, Peru in June of 2010. Every day there were new experiences. All of the local people we served expressed their gratitude in so many ways. Some are shy and will only shake your hand.

Others are more outgoing and will give you a huge hug. It is a very humbling experience to be able to assist people who have not been able to see to read, cook, sew or make simple repairs around their house.



Sorting through glasses  
In Teacapan, Mexico

I first learned about the work of VOSH from my late parents, Walter and Margaret Gilseth, who made several VOSH missions in the early 1980s. I lived in east Africa as a youth so I thought that the cultural difference between the USA and a third world country would not be too much to handle. However, the famous line from the movie "Wizard of Oz" came to mind as soon as we arrived in Montero, Peru "Toto, I don't think we are in Kansas any more". So, if a person is open minded and tolerant of all of the cultural differences you will experience, the work of a VOSH team member will be a very humbling and rewarding experience!

I plan to volunteer again next year and I hope that my wife will be able to join us.  
**Steve Gilseth**

### It gets in a Person's Blood

This winter has been exceedingly long, but for me it has been a lonesome one too. There has been something missing. It's something that usually makes my winters shorter.

It is the fact that my husband Ken and I did not go on a VOSH mission this year. Since 1995 we have been on 12 VOSH trips, 1 Lion's Mission, and a church mission.

On those trips we have had the privilege to help thousands of people to see clearer. It gives me a spiritual boost that continues long into the year.

We did visit friends in Florida for a week, we had a great time, but it was just for us. There is no satisfaction of doing something meaningful to carry into the year. I urge everyone to get involved if you aren't already. It rounds out my life and it may yours. Next year we WILL join a VOSH mission, somewhere!!!!

**Laurie Baalson, Emily MN**



## Thank You

A BIG thank you is in order to Bob Merriam of Owensboro, Kentucky! He was able to quickly manufacture a replacement set of battery packs for our Retinomax autorefractor when they were left behind at customs. Bob is an electrical engineer by trade, and has been on close to 80 VOSH missions! He has been known as the "King of the Retinomax". Bob and his wife Shirley have accompanied VOSH-MN once to Honduras a few years ago. Although he has planned to quit trips, Bob said that group was one of the best he had ever traveled with and he would consider going again!





Terry Tancabel O.D., Al Paymar O.D.,  
Steve Hepokoski O.D., Brooke Bush O.D.

## Previous Missions

### Ecuador

My first VOSH mission was in May 2009 to Portoviejo, Ecuador. I had so many amazing memories of the people I was able to help with vision problems, the folks I worked with, the travels throughout the country, etc. that I said afterwards I definitely would partake in another mission, if given the chance. Fortunately, a few months after my return I met Hildara and Doug Blakesley at the Crystal Vision Center where we sort and pack used eyeglasses for mission trips. They were organizing a trip the following year to Hildara's hometown of Montero, Peru. "Sign me up", I said.

June 2010 our group left for Montero, Peru. I used the time before we departed to take a class in Spanish and learn about Peru. Comparing the 2 mission trips there were similar plus different aspects of each. For the Ecuador trip the team traveled the majority of the time together with a planned itinerary. For the Peru trip we were able to travel in smaller groups thus organizing our agendas to be at the designated meeting place at the appointed time, before setting up clinic.

Clinics are basically set up the same way, waiting area, space for registration, visual charts, doctors, dispensing of eyeglasses and adjustments.

Both missions included a 4 ½-5 day work week plus time for R&R.

My Spanish class helped me to communicate to the patients, although I was extremely happy many times to be able to use the assistance of a translator.

It is extremely difficult to convey to family, friends and co-workers the immediate gratitude received by participants that take part in a VOSH mission. I guess the best way to describe it is, "You have to be there." The people who obtain the eyeglasses are so thankful.

There are many expressions of, "gracias", including numerous hugs and smiles. Everything is not rosy all the time. Sometimes, through a lot of effort it is impossible to dispense eyeglasses for the prescription needed or to provide the type of help the patient requires. This results in sadness.

Upon returning to Minnesota I could barely wait until the next mission was announced. It didn't take long and in January of this year I was on my way with 25 others to Teacapan, Mexico for a week which included a 3 day work week.



Teacapan, Mexico Group

After all of my conversations about the rewarding adventures I had had on VOSH missions my niece decided to join the team

Her comment on returning was, "It was an unforgettable experience!"

On this mission I was so pleased that my continuing study of Spanish resulted in occasions where I was able to converse in Spanish to a patient throughout the entire transaction of dispensing a pair of eyeglasses that worked for him/her.

Three missions in less than 2 years! I guess you could say, "I'm hooked!"

**Jan Cartwright, Winsted, MN**



Chris Ossmo in  
Teacapan, Mexico



## Membership

New to VOSH? Want to learn how you can help? Do you know someone that would like to participate in an upcoming mission? Are you interested in using a power point presentation to speak about VOSH?

Contact me! Katie Tancabel O.D.  
[katieltancabel@gmail.com](mailto:katieltancabel@gmail.com)



## Previous Missions

### Shell, Ecuador

My wife, 11 year-old daughter, and I traveled to Shell, Ecuador to join an ophthalmologist setting up an eye hospital in an existing mission hospital. We spent 3 days going out to jungle towns setting up screenings and seeing 80-250 patients per day. We also spent one day in an orphanage seeing 60 orphans. In addition to screenings, we spent 5 days in the hospital seeing referrals and more complicated patients. Overall, it was a very successful trip with a lot of happy patients. We would return again given the opportunity.

Some high points to mention: dispensed a pair of -17.00s to a 9 year old boy who had never had glasses. Dispensed a pair of +6.00s to an esotrope and his eyes aligned immediately. Dispensed a pair of +10.00s and a pair of -10.00s to kids under age 10. There was a lot of anisometropia in kids and significant astigmatism.

**Brian Hamann**



## Webmaster

**Webmaster wanted!** Those of you who check out our website may have noticed that it has not been updated in awhile. We are very grateful to Larry Arrigoni for getting a VOSH-Minnesota presence established online, but he is no longer able to maintain it.

If you have an interest and the skills for maintaining a web site, please contact: VOSH-MN president Bob Boeding at [rboeding@q.com](mailto:rboeding@q.com) or Lori Kirschenmann at [lorijok@msn.com](mailto:lorijok@msn.com).

## Happy Mother's Day



**Mother's Day Special!**  
Free exam for the eyes  
in back of your head



**Jerry and Joni Arvidson**  
Retired VOSH members and  
Newsletter editors  
(members 1993 – 2010)



## District 833

Our thanks goes to Independent School District 833 in the east metro for donating several Titmus vision screening instruments.

Unfortunately, the donation was made because the district is no longer doing school screenings, but we will see that the instruments are put to good use! Thank you!.

## Editor's Note

I am very excited to take on the job of editing and producing the VOSH-MN newsletter in hopes to continue to bring visibility (no pun intended) of the work and humanitarian efforts that this wonderful organization does! I have been involved with VOSH since 2004 when I went on my first mission trip to Costa Rica. I have also traveled to Panama on my second mission while in optometry school. I hope these newsletters continue to spark your interest to volunteer and to change your life as well as someone else whom is in need! Any suggestions, questions, corrections, or stories to share please email me at [katietancabel@gmail.com](mailto:katietancabel@gmail.com). Thank you! **Katie Tancabel O.D.**

## Upcoming: Kazakhstan



As some of you know, I have been in contact with a Peace Corp volunteer in Kyrgyzstan who is asking for our help. We have been emailing back and forth to see if this is feasible, and it looks like it is!

We are talking an approximately 10-12 day trip flying into either the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, or into Alm-aty Kazakhstan. Airfare looks like it could be anywhere from \$1400 to \$2000. I am looking for the shortest flight with the least layovers, and I would prefer to fly Delta if possible and if so, connecting through Amsterdam. If we go to Alm-aty, it would involve another visa, and having to cross over a border, which I have never done on all my trips. The trip would be in the last half of September.

Our work location would be either on the north shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, where my contact lives, or in the poorest part of the country, the Naryn Oblast.

In this country, they have "CBT" which stands for 'community based tourism'. People open up their homes to guests and you share meals, etc. Kind of like a B and B the way it sounds. Hotels are also available, but at higher costs. If we do our R and R in country, this would be an option for us.

My plans would be to work 3 days, and not starting until we have a day to recover from our long flight. After work we play or go home.

This would be quite an adventure and I need to know soon if there is enough interest to pursue this trip. If you are at all interested, **PLEASE LET ME KNOW ASAP!**

Contact Jim Hess: [IMNOD@aol.com](mailto:IMNOD@aol.com)

## Upcoming: Ecuador



For this VOSH-MN mission we will be hosted by the Rotary Club of Portoviejo. My friends Liliana and Noralma will be working with me to get things put together.

**Here is the plan:** We will travel to Ecuador on Wed. 8/10 and arrive around 10 pm, stay in a hotel that night. We will travel to Ecuador on 8/10. We will then work from 8am - 5pm for four days and serve about 500 people each day. There will be a day of rest after the first two work days. After working, there will be time for R & R on 8/17 and 8/18. In the past we have traveled to Montecristi to do some shopping, visited a beautiful cathedral, and saw how Panama Hats were made. We have traveled along the coast enjoying the scenery, ocean surf, and pools. We have also traveled to a beautiful church built on the top of a cliff overlooking the ocean and making a stop in a village to see how they make wood boats. People may also want to stay longer to go to the Galapagos Islands or do other things and IF this is something you would be considering then I'll need to know so that different flight arrangements can be made.

**What to expect:** We will be staying in private homes and ask that everyone buy a gift for the home as we will be saving a lot on hotel bills. There will be hotel bills for roughly three nights. ALSO we need to consider the bus to and from Portoviejo.

I require a copy of your passport, a registration form, and a \$50.00 registration fee. This fee covers a membership in VOSH-International & VOSH-MN. as well as two T-shirts.

Please let me know ASAP because I will be limiting the team size to 20! This is mainly due to sleeping arrangements.

Contact Bob Boeding: [ROBOEDING@q.com](mailto:ROBOEDING@q.com)



## Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity - Minnesota Chapter

### VOSH-MN

5200 Douglas Drive

Crystal, MN 55429

[www.voshminnesota.org](http://www.voshminnesota.org)



## President's Message

Greetings! Well here I am beginning my third year. What wisdom can I share with you? First was the VOSH International Convention in Las Vegas last October. Interesting talks by presenters. VOSH International has a program of setting up permanent clinics in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru. They really appreciate the equipment and eyeglasses we shipped to them. They also have a process where they can make a pair of glasses to order. It takes a good operator about 15 minutes to edge the lenses and fit them in the frame. I had an interesting visit with Dr. Brown, the founder of SEE (Seeing Eye Expeditions). We talked about the idea of communicating with them about the number of patients we see needing cataract surgeries once we have been to an area. SEE can then set up their own mission and serve those people. At the MOA convention in Minneapolis in February we had several conversations from those who had an interest in VOSH and some took the new eyeglass collection boxes that Kirk Thomas has designed. I'm putting together another mission to Portoviejo, Ecuador for Aug 10 to 19th, 2011. The time may be WRONG, but the time is also right, because it is WINTER on the equator, as we are being fried here in Minnesota. Temp's range around 75 to 80 degrees NOT --110 like it is in January and February. **DOCTORS I APPEAL TO YOU TO CONSIDER JOINING THE TEAM!** Most of the examinations will be done with the auto-refractor and The Rotary Club will feed, house us, and show us a good time. You will have a great experience! I have 5 students of optometry from Waterloo, Canada to help you. **VOSH-MN President, Bob Boeding**