

VOSH MN remembers 9/11

On September 6th of 2001, six members of VOSH Minnesota, along with nine members from VOSH Florida left for a mission to Bosnia, Herzegovina. On the afternoon of September 11th, we were just ending our second clinic day in the town of Konjick; when one of the team members received a cell phone call from his wife telling us of the attack. Quickly calling the American Embassy, we were told to "get the hell out of there." We were then 2 hours from our hotel in Medjugorje.

Kirk Thomas who lead the mission, cancelled the clinic on the 12th out of respect and mourning for the people back home and then continued the mission on the 13th in the city of Mostar. It even took 3 weeks for the autorefractor to arrive back to Minnesota!

Every American will have there own memories of that day, and we certainly have ours. For the six Minnesota Voshers, it was one of those experiences that we will never forget. This year we held another reunion as we have done each year since 2001. We have worked together on many other VOSH missions over the years, but this mission glued us together for life. God Bless America! **by Joni Arvidson**

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First time VOSH'er

When the opportunity arose to join a VOSH trip to Mexico this past January, I have to admit that I was a bit nervous. I hadn't done any optometric volunteer work before and didn't know many of the other people going on the trip. However, getting out of Minnesota in January was very tempting and I had heard great things about a coworker's VOSH experience. I decided I was up for a little adventure and signed up.

The town we worked in, Teacapan, is located on the west coast of Mexico. We flew into Mazatlan and traveled south by bus to stay in a town called Escanupa for the first night. In addition to hosting a welcoming party, members of the local Lions Club invited us to stay at their homes while in Escunapa. We split into several groups for the night; our hosts, Pepe and Marycruz, were so kind and made us feel very welcome in their home.

The next day we took a bus further south to Teacapan. When we arrived we set up our work site at a school that was within walking distance from our hotel. One part of the main room was sectioned off for exams; to create lanes we blocked the windows with blankets and posted eye charts on each end of the room. Each of us four optometrists had a little table with the essentials: a retinoscope, skiascopy bars, ophthalmoscope, trial frame and trial lenses, and some dilation drops.

We began seeing patients on a Monday morning, following a welcome ceremony from the town. After my first few exams, I quickly learned that I needed to have a much different mindset than I would at home. Resources were limited since we only had access to what we could physically carry with us. Because of this, glasses prescriptions needed to be tailored to what we had available to give patients. Since we did not have access to an ophthalmologist, there was not much we could do to help patients with cataracts or glaucoma. There was also the language barrier issue, which thankfully we had interpreters to help us with. **(CONTINUED)**



First Time VOSHer, Brooke Bush O.D.
in Teacapan, Mexico



Dispensing glasses
in Teacapan, Mexico

First time VOSH'er

(continued)

Even though there were limitations to what could be done, you knew that your skills were helping improve the vision of people who had limited access to eye care. I remember being told that the population was not overly expressive with their emotions. Even so, we got many grateful smiles and thank you's from patients. It was hard work, but very rewarding.

We had our evenings and a few days after clinic ended for some rest and relaxation. In addition to the great group of people we had on our trip, we were able to spend time with a group called the Amigos de Teacapan. The organization, which is made up of retirees from the United States and Canada living in Teacapan, tries to help residents of the town with medical and educational needs. They really went above and beyond and made sure we had food (lots of food) and entertainment after work and on our days off. They also set up a great boat excursion, a whale watching trip, and a walking tour of the town.

My first VOSH trip was wonderful. I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to share the experience with, and I loved meeting and working with the people of Teacapan. I'm hoping to go on another VOSH trip soon!

by Brook Bush

St. Paul Donations

St. Paul Schools donated six vision screeners to VOSH-MN last year. VOSH-MN has donated some of them to Uduak Udom who is the President of the African Council of Optometry.

Eyeglass Boxes

We have received many VOSH-MN eyeglass boxes! We can always use more! Please contact Kirk Thomas holeintheday@hotmail.com if you need another box or know of someone else that does!



Member Update

Larry Arrigoni, who joined VOSH-MN missions to Senegal in 2006, Peru in 2007, and Ecuador in 2009; had an interesting mission this summer! He was on a humanitarian trip to Haiti, helping to build a children's medical clinic, where he was involved in cutting, grinding, and drilling metal.

He wore safety glasses most of the time and cannot recall any specific accident where something flew in his eye.

He noticed something in his eye late the following day and it remained an irritation during his 6 hour car trip back to Port au Prince and then two flights back to Minnesota.

As soon as he got home, he went to the eye doctor and he had a rusty iron shard stuck in his eye. When it was removed, it came out in three pieces and he was told he had rust stains on his eye. The doctor had to use a grinder for the removal of the rust.

Happily, Larry was told he should not have any permanent eye damage! Ironical that with all the "metal grinding" he did in Haiti, he then needed personal "grinding" in his eye when he returned home.

Larry is back to work and life and is thinking about his next adventure!



Patients waiting for exams
in Busuanga, Philippines

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



MISSION REPORT

Previous Missions

BUSUANGA, PHILIPPINES

November 8-20, 2011

Our trip this year was VOSH-MN's third trip to the Philippines, and it was another good one! Fourteen volunteers headed out on a 17+ hour airplane odyssey that ended in Manila, where we all overnighted. Then it was off to the island of Busuanga, in the province of Palawan, another one hour flight.

We worked first in the small village of San Jose, a remote farming area with no access to eye care. We had worked there 2 years ago, and saw some of the same people we helped last time still wearing their glasses. That is always a happy sight to see! We worked in a daycare like setting and had a lot of help from the local government health officials. Since it was such a small area, we ran out of patients about mid afternoon.

We then moved on to the city of Coron, the largest city on Busuanga. There we had an unusual situation develop. We were told by our hosts that we may not see many people that day, a Sunday. They expected most people to stay home, not to go to church; but to watch the Philippine's national hero a boxer, Manny Pacquiao, fight in Las Vegas.

The Coron city officials had it on a large screen in the city auditorium. The fight started around 11:00 am local time, and after 12 rounds, we all heard a loud roar indicating that Pacquiao had won. We never really noticed a smaller crowd during the fight, but the percentage of women was much higher during the fight.



Group picture in
Busuanga, Philippines

We worked in a local health clinic while in Coron and had good cooperation from the local health officials again.

During the mission we saw 1100 patients, from the quite young to the very old. We again saw large amounts of high astigmatism and did our best to help them out. We did not do any surgery on this trip as the facilities were not adequate.

After our work was over our group split up to venture on to other parts of the world. Half of the team remained at our base camp at El Rio y Mar Resort where we enjoyed great food, great hospitality, excellent snorkeling, and a few even did some scuba diving.

Our team this year consisted of Dr. Paul and Tracy Cardinal, Jan Cartwright, Dr. Jim and Margie Hess, Dr. Cindy Hung, Debbie Johnson, Dr. Larry Morrison, Dr. Bob and Susan Ostrow, Dr. Adrienne Pyne, Benita Swenson, Kirk Thomas, and Dr. Bob Warshawsky. **By Jim Hess O.D.**



**Happy
Holidays!**



Thank You

GLENN SCHULZ

Glenn Schulz picked up 15,000 pairs of glasses from the Mankato, MN Lions Club in October. A BIG thank you to Glenn for picking up and transporting all of the glasses for VOSH-MN as well as to the Mankato Lions Club for collecting and donating all of the glasses to us!

CHURCH OF THE RISEN SAVIOR

A donation of \$3,000 to VOSH-MN was received earlier this year from the Church of the Risen Savior in Burnsville, MN. A small group of one optometrist, Pat Wellik, O.D., and eight volunteers traveled to Gris-Gris, Haiti in February (10-19th) 2011.

They saw 614 patients and dispensed glasses to over 85% of them! The group realized the value of the autorefractor on this mission and made the donation to go toward the purchase of a second hand held autorefractor!

Previous Missions

PORT ANTONIO, JAMAICA

January 8-15, 2011

Doctors Larry and Michael Morrison from Morrison Eye Care would like to thank all of the volunteers who participated in, and helped support, the 2011 VOSH mission to Port Antonio, Jamaica. Without the countless hours of service and dedication from American and Jamaican volunteers the mission would not have been possible!

A special thanks needs to be given to Dr. Satya Parvataneni, (Dr.P) and the Jamaican people for their exceptional hospitality. Dr. P is a local physician in Port Antonio and an active member of Rotary. He and his fellow Rotarians are dedicated to the health and well being of the people of Port Antonio and he has been instrumental in hosting over 20 VOSH missions in addition to countless surgical missions.

The mission began on February 27, 2011 and lasted eight days. Equipment brought with included: 6,000 pairs of glasses, sunglasses and readers, ophthalmic examination equipment, and \$20,000 in ophthalmic pharmaceuticals donated by Allergan. A little fewer than 1,000 patients were seen in three days of clinic and around 1,500 pairs of glasses were dispensed. These patients were preselected based on need by Dr. P. and volunteers in Port Antonio, Jamaica.

In addition, 129 glaucoma patients were seen. Forty one new cases of glaucoma were diagnosed, treatment initiated, and referred to the Jamaican public health system for follow up. Sixty four severe cataract patients were seen with 26 referred for surgery. Several sun related diseases such as pterygiums were seen. There were also many people with diabetic retinopathy, hypertension, keratoconus and other miscellaneous eye diseases.



Serving 1,800 people
in Portoviejo, Ecuador

There were three optometrists, one retired physician, and one optician along with many other volunteers that went on this VOSH mission.

After working in the clinic, the group was able to have some time at the beach, bamboo rafting, and visiting Reach Falls which is a waterfall with underground caves and tunnels behind it. **by Larry Morrison O.D.**

PORTOVIEJO, ECUADOR

August 10-19, 2011

Three optometrists (from NY, KY, and NC) and five optometry students from the University of Waterloo in Canada accompanied VOSH-MN President Bob Boeding to Ecuador in August 10-19th, 2011.

They were hosted and stayed in the homes of The Club Rotario Portoviejo Reales Tamarindos.

Within four days of clinic, they were able to serve 1,800 people with glasses! Of these people, they estimated that 20% were in great need of cataract removal. This number may seem high, however, they did serve many people from a nursing home.

One of the optometry students, Kevin Chavez, said that the experience was fantastic and really helped him break the ice with patients and learn how to deal with an intense environment.

He also noted that he got to see a variety of eye diseases that were really rare, something very beneficial!

The students from Waterloo were a GREAT group of young professionals. They all had caring attitudes toward the patients and conducted themselves in a very professional manner.

They were very helpful to the success of the mission. **by Bob Boeding**



Satisfied patients
in Portoviejo, Ecuador

Did you know?

CONTACT LENSES

Lyndon Johnson was the first president to wear contact lenses.

OSTRICHES

The ostrich is the only bird with eyelashes.

More Previous Missions

TEACAPAN, MEXICO

January 8 – 15, 2011

Canadian members of the group, Amigos de Teacapan in Mexico, had been trying for several years to introduce an optical program to Teacapan, Mexico. Once they made contact with Third World Eyecare, Vancouver, BC they were then referred to advise VOSH CA who then referred them to VOSH MN. Their willingness to not give up is what allowed this mission to take place!

The rest is a wonderful history of hard work with 475 e-mails linking the Lions Club of Escuinapa ex-president, Ramon Rivera, myself, Linda Taylor, and Amigos de Teacapan to the project. The Director of the "Pesca school", Senor Topeti, provided the facilities where the optical program was conducted by our VOSH team.

Members of the Amigos de Teacapan team provided three days of lunch cooked by "Laura's Cocina Economica". A number of volunteers, both Canadian and American, came from their homes and winter residences to help us. Bilingual Mexican volunteers translated for our team and without their help the program would not have been so successful!

At the entrance to the school where the reception committee was to welcome the VOSH team; students, staff, and spectators were assembled to watch the school drill team perform and present the Mexican flag. It was an impressive ceremony!

The gates opened at 8:30am and people were greeted at the reception desk by Mexican, Canadian, and American volunteers who sat in the shade of a big old bus registering names and eye complaints. Unfortunately no addresses or phone numbers are available making it almost impossible in a small Mexican village to allow for follow-up care. The line of men, women, children and babies stood in the sun and in the shade of the buildings where they were to be examined. A wheelchair from Vancouver, BC, was provided for the handicapped, the aged, and children in need.

There were five stations for the examination with the last one (dispensing) being held in a large barrack-like room where we dispensed glasses. Many people returned to the reception desk to show off their new glasses and express their gratitude by shaking hands with the volunteers. One elderly woman even danced a jig! **1800 pairs of glasses distributed plus 1700 pairs of brand new sunglasses were also distributed.**

The VOSH team was graciously entertained in several winter homes of Americans in Teacapan in the evenings. There was an overflowing crowd, entertainment was provided by students of the school.

Four organizations all coordinated together over many months to serve the sleepy fishing village. From the moment we started working until the end of our mission -- we did not turn a single person away. There was no one left when I closed the gates on our last day. Perfect mission. **by Kirk Thomas**

A little humor

A friend sent this piece to me and since I have been to many places around the world over the years, I could relate...maybe you can also! **from Kirk Thomas**

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone. I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there. I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family and work. I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often. I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm. Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older. One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!



Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity - Minnesota Chapter

VOSH-MN

5200 Douglas Drive

Crystal, MN 55429

www.voshminnesota.org



Future: Cusco, Peru



Possibly set for July or August of 2012. If you would like to know more information on this mission or are interested in seeing this part of the world then please contact Bob Boeding at: rboeding@q.com.

Organizing



If you are interested in organizing a mission or have a contact in a country where you feel a VOSH-MN mission could take place, please don't hesitate to contact one of the VOSH-MN board members!