



Dr. Vilella of VOSH-PA, with a patient at the clinic site in Guatemala

## Doug Vilella, OD, honored for efforts in Guatemala

Pennsylvania optometrist Doug Vilella was named the national recipient of VSP's (Vision Service Plan) fourth annual People First Humanitarian Award during the AOA Convention in Texas in June. The national award recipient is selected from six regional winners who are nominated for their "people first" philosophy, demonstrated through commitment and/or involvement in an implemented program, community service

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**EYE CARE CLINIC FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA:** As we went to press, Lloyd Pate, OD, Professor at the University of Houston Optometry School and President of newly-formed VOSH-Texas, found himself immediately pressed into service to set up an eye care clinic for Hurricane Katrina victims who had been sent to the Houston Astrodome. He feels patients at this well-run on-site clinic received more rapid and in some cases, better care, than they had been receiving in city health clinics. Watch for further coverage in our next issue.

## VOSH goes to GHANA, March 17-April 6, 2005

By Harry I Zeltzer, OD, DOS, FAAO

Flying to Ghana from the United States generally takes a day of travel and a day of recovery. V/I's representatives had many good reasons to endure the journey.

First we were to take part in a co-mission of American and African optometry students, something which had never been attempted. VOSH students from the Pacific University College of Optometry (PUCO) and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) coordinated eye programs in the rural communities of Kumasi, Western Ghana.

Assisting the team were faculty members from KNUST, SVOSH, along with V/I members, Drs Dale Cole, John Randall and myself. Matt Lampa ably led the PUCO students. It was a wonderful collaboration, underscored by sharing instruments and good fellowship.

By week's end, students had examined 1260 patients under grueling heat. For dispensing, the team used recycled and Helen Keller eyeglasses, readers and topical medications.



Following a successful eye care clinic with Kumasi School of Optometry students, Dale Cole, OD, (l) and Harry Zeltzer, OD, (r) presented a number of ophthalmoscopes to the school. The refurbished instruments had been donated to VOSH by Welch-Allyn.

A second reason for this trip was a visit to the University of Cape Coast Optometry School (UCC). Prior arrangements had been made by V/I to work with UCC faculty and students at a Liberian refugee Camp in

Buduburam. This was the school's first humanitarian program. What V/I initiated will continue during UCC's next academic year, in partnership with "Unite For Sight," a sponsor of the eye clinic at the Buduburam Camp.

During our third week, we attended a combined meeting of the World Council of Optometry, the African Council of Optometry and the Ghana Optometrists Association in Accra. My presentation,

"Integrating Volunteerism into Long-Term, Sustainable Projects," introduced participants to VOSH/INTERNATIONAL and its objectives.

I am pleased to report that since our visit to Africa, three new chapters from Nigeria and Ghana have been added to our VOSH roster. Further, a movement to collect badly-needed good, used instruments and books may find a way of reaching African Schools of Optometry through efforts initiated by V/I.

## Working with Project HOPE in Indonesia

by Mark Cook, OD, VOSH-MI

In January of this year, in response to the Tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, President Bush ordered the hospital ship USNS Mercy to Indonesia to provide health care support to the area. Additionally the US government asked the non-governmental organization, Project HOPE, to recruit a volunteer medical team to staff the 1000-bed hospital ship and to provide land-based care in cooperation with the US Navy medical staff assigned to the Mercy. This combined team of civilians and military personnel was a history making first for the government's disaster relief efforts around the world. The leadership of the Navy and Project HOPE successfully integrated these two very different disaster relief models to provide maximum health care services to the people of Banda Aceh and Nias Island.

On January 12, 2005 VOSH/INTERNATIONAL broadcast a request for an optometrist to volunteer for a thirty day mission for the Tsunami relief. I had



Mark Cook, OD (R), with Navy Lt. Bob Senko, OD, aboard the USNS Mercy; that's the USS Abraham Lincoln behind them.

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# VOSH/INTERNATIONAL Board makes organizational changes

by Ruth S. McAndrews, OD, VOSH-IA  
President, VOSH/INTERNATIONAL

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH) is now over thirty years old. I remember going to VOSH/INTERNATIONAL meetings several years ago where the biggest wish was a central data source for information. Where do other Chapters get supplies? Who has found a good host in a particular location? What obstacles or challenges did other mission leaders encounter and how did they manage the situation? While we networked in person and in periodic newsletters, information was scattered and difficult to access.

Today with the V/I website ([www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org)) and electronic communication, this dream has become a reality. There have been many occasions where these connections have saved and enhanced missions, but no example is so dramatic as with Hurricane Katrina.

As we go to print, our Public Health Advisor, Dr. Jerry Vincent, is in Thailand preparing a comprehensive plan for optometric assistance for hurricane victims. (Watch for his recommendations on our website.)

Dr. Lloyd Pate of VOSH/Texas and the University of Houston College of Optometry set up a temporary eye clinic in the Houston Astrodome and were able to broadcast their needs. VOSH/Florida and Spectera were able to send frames immediately. We notified Mark Sachs of PRVAIL, an organization that supplies readers and plano sunglasses for the cost of freight and photos.

VOSH-VA sprang into action to enlist volunteers when notified by the VA Dept. of Health that 1,500 evacuees would be arriving at Fort Prickett in Blackstone, VA.

And, when it appeared that victims were to be brought to Camp Edwards in MA, VOSH/NECO, with the Massachusetts Society of Optometrists, was already offering to provide eye care for the anticipated influx. While that project has been scaled back significantly for the moment, once again, it indicates our ability and willingness to take immediate action.

Similarly, last winter, with the input of Dr. Vincent and our Asian Pacific Advisor Hare Patnaik, we have been able to provide an organized response to the Tsunami region. Dr. Dale Cole led a mission team to that area in late October.

Ultimately, VOSH/INTERNATIONAL and its Chapters are doing their best to communicate and coordinate with the American



Newly sworn-in V/I Board members include L-r: vice-presidents Larry Hookway, OD, (to complete the unexpired term of Sandy Bury, OD), Nelson Rivera, OD, of Texas, and Jeff Forrey of Seattle, Washington, with newly-elected president Ruth McAndrews, OD.

Optometric Association, state associations, local optometric societies, and other worldwide humanitarian organizations. Our goal is to be part of the solution in these circumstances.

In the meantime, the need for eye care elsewhere is still overwhelming. In addition to our traditional mission programs, VOSHers are also helping to establish permanent clinics. Dr. Doug Vilella and VOSH-PA's project is highlighted on page 1.

As a follow-up to the trip Drs. Cole and Zeltzer made to Ghana (also highlighted on

page 1), we are now working with Rotarians and World Medical Relief in Detroit to send more books and examination equipment to the optometry schools in Ghana. Training local providers, improved health care education, and better equipment results in better ongoing eye care.

All of these efforts require time and money. Consequently, the VOSH/INTERNATIONAL executive board met with a professional moderator in order to develop a long-range plan. The first step of this plan was implemented by a vote of the Chapters in September. We changed the constitution allowing us to expand the size of our working board of directors. Executive Director and Webmaster Dr. Harry Zeltzer, and Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. Charles Covington have graciously been doing near-full time positions in perpetuity with no salaries. While VOSH/INTERNATIONAL has been blessed with generous corporate support, we need to establish additional long-term funding in order to maintain and expand our services. I would challenge anyone to find an organization that has accomplished this much with no paid staff.

Together with your help, we will keep the communication open as we face the challenges ahead.

## 2005 Corporate and Chapter donations

From a sleepy organization with no specific direction, VOSH/INTERNATIONAL continues to evolve into a dynamic leadership role, serving its membership more positively and reaching out to work with other organizations worldwide who are involved in efforts to eliminate preventable blindness where there is little or no care available presently.

Through our well-visited website alone, we are paving an important role as a clearing house for eyecare missions around the globe, not just by listing upcoming trips, but by matching requests for teams with groups interested in serving, by offering immediate solutions when VOSH volunteers encounter problems, by hosting a message board where questions, notes and requests are posted from

around the globe.

None of our ongoing accomplishments would be possible without the financial support of our corporate donors and our member Chapters.

As our role escalates, our costs escalate. Did you know, for example, that hosting a booth at the AOA cost \$1,500 even though we received a discounted rate.

This is a good problem, but it is also a challenging one, particularly in times when businesses and individuals are tightening their belts.

Our appreciation goes out to our member Chapters who are understandably burdened with the need to come up with money for their own projects as well as the efforts of its parent organization.

We'd like to acknowledge the following cor-

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V/I president Ruth McAndrews with Mike Kuykendall of Alcon Laboratories, which, in 2004 alone, donated \$208,000 in supplies to 28 individual VOSH Chapter projects.

## Rethinking the clinical mission; we need to train the locals

by Jerry Vincent OD, MPH  
Blindness Prevention Consultant,  
International Rescue Committee

University of Houston, College of Optometry (Adj)

Dr. Vincent played a major advisory role to V/I following the tsunami disaster in the far east. He has since been appointed Public Health Advisor to V/I. The following article reflects the views he presented in a speech he delivered at the V/I Annual Meeting in Texas in June.

I have been reading annual reports, searching web sites, and in some cases, contacting key staff of various volunteer, charity and humanitarian organizations known to be involved with eye care in order to try to gather output data. From this it appears that all humanitarian or charity efforts combined appear to be serving about a million people a year with refractive error needs. Considering there are a lot of small organizations and informal groups of practitioners working on small scale, this number is not likely to be higher than two million a year being served.

One or two million a year being helped appears to be an admirable number, but up to 500 million people are in need of eyeglasses and don't have them. Considering that an average pair of eyeglasses probably lasts 2-5 years, the provision rate to adequately meet this unmet need would be from 100 million to 250 million eyeglasses per year.

We, the entire community of humanitarian, volunteer and charity eye programs are addressing from 0.4% to 2.0% of the annual unmet need. Assuming that all agencies combined worked harder, and output doubled, our efforts would still be facing a considerable uphill battle. A combination of population growth and population aging may double the global unmet need by the year 2020. From a public health and statistical standpoint, our work is largely irrelevant and our ability to cope with the need will shrink.

Organizations such as VOSH could work harder to raise more funds to allow current volunteers to go on more missions. They might attract more volunteers and develop more chapters. The mission workday could be extended to increase patient flow by 10 or 20 percent. Any number of things could be done to make clinical missions a bit more productive and useful. Although some improvements in efficiency might be realized, the output of VOSH and other organizations relying on clinical examinations from optometrists or other professionally trained refractionists will be limited by the number of refractionists available.



At the V/I Annual Meeting, speaker Jerry Vincent, OD, MPH, was delighted to find himself reunited with Stella Odjimogho, OD, MBA, MHPM, a former optometry student of his from the days when he taught at the University of Benin, Nigeria.

An optometrist who trains 2-5 health workers each year to independently do simple refractions will be responsible for a significantly higher output (patients served) compared to the optometrist who sees all patients. The resource base of VOSH could be used to extend refractive correction to a much greater number of people if missions were training oriented rather than clinically oriented.

Training local refractionists is happening now, in several countries. Organizations such as Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM) the International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE), International Rescue Committee (IRC), InFOCUS, SCOJO and others have implemented training for local refractionists. Faculty members from several optometry schools have been directly involved with training local health workers to do refractions.

The World Health Organization's Prevention of Blindness Program has repeatedly promoted the use of local health workers and local volunteers in addressing trachoma, river blindness and vitamin A deficiency. WHO has also encouraged the training of non-ophthalmologists in basic cataract surgery and lid surgery for Trichiasis. Expect WHO to endorse the training of local health workers to do refractions.

Training provides more effective use of both human and financial resources and ultimately provides more sustainable eye care. Training local health workers to do refractions is the only feasible way to reach the hundreds of millions who currently need eyeglasses but don't have them. The Vision 2020 goal of addressing unmet refractive error needs will not be met without such training.

## Corporate and Chapter donations

Continued from page 2  
porate benefactors for 2005:

Once again, VISTAKON has renewed its \$20,000 grant to enable us to continue our work.

Spectera Vision has renewed its \$5,000 cash pledge and has made a number of donations of new frames, which are valued at nearly \$500,000 to date. They have also pledged a further donation to the Tsunami victim eyecare project that's been initiated by past-president Dale Cole, OD.

Alcon Laboratories, at the time of our annual meeting in June, had already donated drugs and other supplies to 23 individual VOSH Chapter projects for this year totalling \$185,328. That's up significantly from

their already generous donation of just over \$208,000 to 28 individual projects for the previous 12-month period.

Thanks also go out to Essilor for providing airline tickets for two representatives to participate in the UNESCO Conference on Visual Health in Central America, held in Fort Lauderdale in May, 2005. Essilor has also agreed to provide airline fares for board representation at the three Optometry 2020 summit meetings.

Thank you everyone. You are all important to us. We are grateful for your continued support.

In planning for 2006, a committee has been formed to seek out grants, foundation, corporate and other support. We welcome your suggestions, expertise and assistance. Please contact Dr. McAndrews at

ruthmca@iowatelecom.net



At the Texas meeting, David Hall, President of Spectera Vision and Jeannette Duerr, v-p Corporate Communications, presented outgoing president Dale Cole, OD, (l) a check for \$,5000, continuing its support of V/I efforts.

## Five new Chapters inducted

V/I embraced its international role in accepting 5 new Chapters into the fold at the V/I Annual Meeting in Texas. Four of the five are on foreign soil and are allied with existing schools of Optometry. Welcome to all of you.

**VOSH-SOS (Peru):** In Lima Peru, Severo Sanchez, OD, heads VOSH-SOS, a Peruvian Chapter attached to the Lima School of Optometry and Science. In this country of 27 million, there are presently 380 ODs, 72 ophthalmologists, 650 opticians, and 4 schools of optometry.

After reading about VOSH on our website, Dr. Sanchez traveled to the V/I meeting in Florida last year and connected with board member Patti Fuhr, OD, who is on the faculty of the Alabama School of Optometry. Through their contact, an initial VOSH collaboration came about in the early fall when Dr. Fuhr and two colleagues traveled to Lima and presented a pediatric optometry and a low-vision rehabilitation clinic at his optometry school, the Instituto Superior Eurohispano. [sanchez2102@hotmail.com](mailto:sanchez2102@hotmail.com)

**VOSH-UCC (Ghana):** This Chapter has been formed in conjunction with Cape Coast University School of Optometry in Ghana. The school was established just four years ago in 2001 and it has 45 students in its 6-year program. (See related article on page 1.) [drilechie@yahoo.com](mailto:drilechie@yahoo.com)

**VOSH-UNIBEN (Nigeria):** This Chapter has been formed in conjunction with the University of Benin School of Optometry in Benin, Nigeria. In existence since 1973, the six-year course of study includes community outreach projects and they are looking forward to working on VOSH related projects. [faustikem@yahoo.com](mailto:faustikem@yahoo.com)

*Monica Obaedo, OD, chief optometrist at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital in Benin, Nigeria, cautioned that where there is an optometric infrastructure being developed, "they must be utilized and there must be strict guidelines for others with less training." She, too, noted her school's need for equipment and books.*



**VOSH-ABIA (Nigeria):** This Chapter has been formed at the Abia School of Optometry in Abia State, Nigeria where the 6-year optometry program has been in existence since 1981. This program also includes community outreach programs. [drikonne@yahoo.com](mailto:drikonne@yahoo.com)

**VOSH-Kentucky:** Greg Hagedorn, OD, heads up one of our two new American chapters. He has been ably assisted in organizational details by Bob Merriam, a longtime, dedicated VOSH-Indiana volunteer who will now lend his talents to VOSH-KY. The fledgling team has already served in Peru. [idox@lightpower.net](mailto:idox@lightpower.net)

**VOSH-Texas:** Lloyd Pate, OD, a professor at the Houston School of Optometry is directing Chapter efforts in the big state. Following Hurricane Katrina, he was tapped to coordinate a temporary vision care clinic for hurricane victims in the Houston Astrodome. [LPate@OPTOMETRY.UH.EDU](mailto:LPate@OPTOMETRY.UH.EDU)

The need/demand for optometric teams continues to grow worldwide. Recognizing that we cannot do it alone, the V/I board is making an effort to nurture the development of Chapters in foreign countries where there are optometry schools, planning to partner with them in developing sustainable eyecare projects for the underserved in their country.



*Michael D. Jones, Executive Director of the American Optometric Association, presented a welcoming address to open the 2005 V/I Annual Meeting*



*(R): Attorney John Gehrig, V/I Legal Counsel and member of VOSH-FL, listening to a discussion at the informal reception hosted by V/I, following the Annual Meeting*



*Newly-elected V/I vice-Rivera translated a letter from the first lady of Nicaragua to honor her for her assistance in VOSH efforts (particular in the Northeast) to bring medical people of Nicaragua. R. Bolanos was unable to attend.*



*L-r: Optometrist Saiz Granada, Program Leader (Fundacion Privada S David Eldridge, OD, which has been assisting sites (San Salvador) for many years about FUEDEM, a non-profit provides eyecare to 550 tight rental quarters. The rest average \$3. Families in the country (7 million). FUEDEM's goal of bringing two surgical units and clinics. [fudem@telesal.com](mailto:fudem@telesal.com)*

Left: V/I vice-president Patti Fuhr, OD, shares a light-hearted moment with the indefatigable octogenarian Ike Fitzgerald, one of the featured speakers at the V/I Annual Meeting. Ike has spearheaded the growth and development of the Texas Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center (TLERC), in Midland, Texas, for nearly 15 years. Additionally, TLERC has established prison recycling projects as well as satellite operations. More recently his group has initiated an optical training program in which volunteers come to the Recycling Center for training, then travel to underdeveloped nations to train locals to hold clinics. "We need to train the locals. One billion people can't take care of 5 billion," summarized Ike. [tlerc@attglobal.net](mailto:tlerc@attglobal.net)



Left: Jennifer Staples, president of "Unite for Sight," discussed the non-profit eyecare organization she founded in 2000, partnering university students, health care projects and organizations worldwide to improve eye health and eliminate preventable blindness. [www.uniteforsight.org](http://www.uniteforsight.org)



OPTOMETRY GIVING SIGHT: L-r: Tony DiStefano, OD, of the World Council of Optometry (WCO), Harry I Zeltzer, OD, Executive Director of V/I, and Brian Holden, OD, professor of Optometry at the University of New South Wales. Dr. Holden chairs the Global Executive Management Committee for "Optometry Giving Sight, (OGS)." He spoke about this collaborative fundraising initiative of the World Optometry Foundation, (WOF) the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and the International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE). It's goal is to raise funds to support sustainable projects around the world that will target the prevention of blindness due to refractive error and to help those with permanent low vision. [www.givingsight.org](http://www.givingsight.org)

## The Flavor of Texas

It was a jam-packed, thought-provoking two days for attendees of the 2005 V/I Annual Meeting in Dallas in June. Representatives from 17 Chapters were on hand for the Wednesday afternoon speakers session and the Thursday morning business meeting. Some participants felt so strongly about what VOSH has to offer that they traveled from as far as Nigeria and El Salvador to participate in person. "My experience here is worth the trip," noted Stella Odjimogho, OD, MBA, of Benin City, Nigeria.

Several speakers emphasized the need to develop cooperative strategies among like-minded groups and to share resources in order to maximize services and avoid duplication. Developing sustainable projects was another term that was repeatedly mentioned. Some speakers gave startling statistics indicating that no matter how hard individual teams work, we cannot even come close to eradicating preventable blindness worldwide unless we develop programs that the local people can implement themselves on an ongoing basis.



Nelson Edwards, OD, Of VOSH-MI, helping out at the V/I booth in the AOA Exhibit Hall. This year, V/I will set up and staff additional informational/recruiting booths at Vision Expo West, SECO, and Heart of America (KS). During the AOA Convention, Dr. Edwards presented a workshop for paraoptometrics entitled "VOSH-What you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask."



Hare Patnaik of Michigan, current president of VOSH-India, enjoys a laugh with "Shorty" at an AOA reception hosted by ALCON. Because of his extensive knowledge of his native country as well as his contacts and participation in health camps there, Mr. Patnaik has been appointed by the V/I Board to serve as Advisor for East Asia.

## Dr. Cook with project HOPE in Banda Ache

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no hesitation in volunteering. I felt that I needed to do this like I needed to breathe. I had a great staff, office manager and an associate (Dr. Jeff Hayden) who could competently and indefinitely manage my practice, so I made the contact and submitted my resume.

I found out sometime later that Project Hope was receiving resumes at one per minute from the healthcare community. Many of the one hundred civilian mission members had pre-

vious disaster relief experience. I'm convinced that I was selected because of my prior association with ten VOSH-MI missions to Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica.

By January 26 we were all assembled in Baltimore for orientation on the sister hospital ship to the Mercy, the USNS Comfort. We underwent two days of orientation safety (the quickest and most efficient way to get dead on a ship and how to avoid it, or at least how to do it without inconveniencing the ship's crew), infectious disease risks, anti-terrorism suggestions,

live lifeboat drills, fire safety and more.

Project Hope had the foresight to invite and integrate optometry and ophthalmology to participate in this mission, which was also an historic first for them.

Prior to the tsunami, sophisticated health care was available in Indonesia only if you had the financial resources to pay for it. The vast majority of the Banda Ache population could not afford basic vision care and glasses before the tsunami. The catastrophe virtually destroyed the health system infrastructure, compounding the problem for all economic classes.

During the twelve weeks the Mercy remained in Indonesia, Jim Honl, OD, Navy Lt. Bob Senko, OD, and I saw thousands of patients and dispensed as many pairs of glasses. The eye team that went ashore each day consisted of one optometrist, two ophthalmologists and one navy corpsman acting as an optician. Within five days we were averaging two hundred exams per day. Crowds grew larger and more difficult to control each day. Eventually eight navy security personnel were needed for crowd control outside clinic sites. Our goal and challenge was to leave no one unseen by the time we had to leave each day.

One fellow who had been waiting a few hours to get his eyes examined, passed out and had a seizure. The medical staff took care of him and attempted to call an ambulance. However, he came to and realized that if he went to the hospital, he would lose his place in line. The man refused further care until he got to have his eyes checked.

The total count for all eye care patients reached 4,900 exams and surgeries with 4,747 glasses being dispensed by the end of the twelve-week mission. It quickly became obvious that the vision care needs of these people could only be met if the three O's worked together, maximized on our individual skills and did what each does best. Optometry refracted, prescribed and referred; the surgeons did cataract surgery and the navy opticians made and dispensed the glasses that were provided.

Looking back on these Indonesian experiences teaches us a valuable lesson. If we are sincere and truly committed in trying to provide maximum vision care on missions, then we will need to combine technology, optometry, ophthalmology and opticians to achieve that goal. Dr. Steve Prepas, our civilian volunteer ophthalmologist, said it best when he summed up our efforts just after we left Banda Ache by saying "the whole of the eye team's efforts was greater than the sum of its parts."

## Dr. Vilella receives People First Award

*Continued from page 1*

and personal interactions.

For many years, Dr. Vilella, working with VOSH-PA, has focused his time, skills and effort to bring optometric services to the villages of Guatemala. Through his commitment, \$1.6 million has been received since 1997 through foundation grants and gifts from private benefactors to build three permanent eye clinics in three different parts of Guatemala. In that time, the clinics have treated more than 130,000 people, provided in excess of 90,000 pairs of glasses and performed nearly 12,000 surgeries, mostly cataracts and corneal transplants.

These eye clinics are the sole source of eye care services for more than two million of the poorest patients in Central America. The clinics are staffed full-time by 30 Guatemalans, including four ophthalmologists and two optometrists.

"People were blind from cataracts because there was nowhere to go for surgery. The closest city is about 10 hours away and they have no vehicles to get there," explains Dr. Vilella. "We help the Guatemalan humanitarian doctors acquire the equipment and facilities they need to provide long-term care and services to their patients.

"Before VOSH-PA began its development work to build infrastructure for these physicians, we were only able to provide optometric services through brief mission trips. There was a great need for ongoing services and medical procedures in these remote areas of Guatemala. This year we will treat in excess of 20,000 patients, dispense more than 4,000 glasses and perform 3,000 surgeries."

The Guatemalan clinic sites are now part of a growing network of eye clinics in six countries (Nepal, Malawi, Salvador, Egypt, Costa Rica and India) managed by the International Eye Foundation (IEF). The long-term sustain-

ability of the clinics is funded by sliding scale fee-for-services from those patients who can pay, while providing free care to children and the destitute poor.

Dr. Vilella's family often joins him on trips to the Guatemalan clinics to work with patients. His wife is a physician's assistant and has found her skills very valuable in the villages. Their two children, ages 15 and 2, also participate in the Guatemala projects.

Dr. Vilella has very little free time between his Erie, Pa. practice, his Guatemalan trips and his family. Still, his passion for long-distance outdoor sports has motivated him to develop "Climb for Sight" as a way to raise money for the Guatemalan clinics. He was initially inspired by a friend who was climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to raise pledges for another organization. The Guatemalan fund-raising climb is now an annual event. When the team celebrated its fifth summit in February 2005, it was the first time everyone on the team made it to the top.

The combined regional and national award Dr. Vilella received from VSP totalled \$7,000. Dr. Vilella has designated both the charitable portion and his personal portion of the award to further the work VOSH-PA is carrying out in Guatemala. It will specifically be used toward a pilot project to screen all children in the 3 Guatemalan departments that are currently served by the clinics. VOSH-PA hopes that this program will expand throughout all of the departments in Guatemala to help the adult population better understand and seek eyecare.

In describing what the People First Award means to him, Dr. Vilella says, "I'm purely an orchestra leader. The orchestra is the VOSH-PA board of directors, students, our 130 volunteers who perform the missions, and our Guatemalan team. This is an award for all of us. I hope that it will help inspire others to volunteer in humanitarian projects, whether it's at home, in their community, or across the world."

# VOSH newsnotes at a glance

## **FUNDS FOR KATRINA**

**VICTIMS:** V/I is collecting funds earmarked specifically for eye clinics serving victims of Hurricane Katrina. Donations can be sent to V/I, Hurricane Katrina Fund, c/o Secretary-treasurer Charles Covington, 111 Linda Lane, Lake Mary, FL 32746

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## **PRVAIL COLLABORATES:**

When contacted immediately after Hurricane Katrina, Mark Sachs of PRVAIL (Partners in Restoring Vision and Improving Lives) didn't hesitate to offer reading glasses and sunglasses to VOSH-Texas which was spearheading efforts to provide eye care to the people in the Houston Astrodome.

Since 2003, PRVAIL has supplied over 50,000 pair of readers and plano sunglasses to groups going to underdeveloped countries and to those serving low income people in the US. Glasses are supplied at no charge other than freight. PRVAIL asks only for pictures and stories from people receiving the glasses. See [www.restoringvision.org](http://www.restoringvision.org)

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## **LOW VISION AIDS AVAILABLE THROUGH COOPERATIVE VENTURE:**

Thanks to Carson Optical of New York, V/I received a huge gift of low vision aids. The Texas Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center (TLERC) trucked them from California to its facility in Midland, Texas where they have been repackaged for distribution.

Cost plus shipping is only \$15 for 84 magnifiers in seven different powers. The only stipulation is that they must be used for the indigent in underdeveloped countries. For additional information, contact [tlerc@attglobal.net](mailto:tlerc@attglobal.net)

Hats off to Ike Fitzgerald for collaborating with us to make low-vision aids available in places where they are practically non-existent.

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## **DONATIONS OF EQUIPMENT AND TEXTBOOKS TO AFRICAN OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS:**

When Drs. Zeltzer

and Cole came back from Ghana they brought with them a plea from Ghanaian optometry students for textbooks and equipment that are new or in good condition. Representatives from the University of Benin who attended the meeting also cited the need for these learning tools.

The V/I Board expressed concern about the logistics and cost of trying to implement such a project. In yet another display of generosity and cooperation, Ike Fitzgerald agreed to store any larger equipment that is donated at the TLERC Texas facility as long as space is available.

V/I has also learned of the World Medical Relief program in Detroit, MI, which is already shipping medical supplies and equipment to Ghana in cooperation with Rotary International. The target date for shipment of the next container from Detroit is December, 2005. The address to send donations of equipment, books or instruments is: World Medical Relief, c/o Kojo Dom; Ghana Equipment Container, 11745 Rosa Park Blvd; Detroit, MI 48026-1270.

If you are planning to remodel your office or retire, consider giving your phoropter, text books or hand instruments to a foreign optometry school. All equipment must be in good workable condition. Hand instruments should only use "C" or "D" cell batteries. The only cost to the donor is shipping (tax deductible) to Detroit or Texas. Further questions can be directed to Dale Cole, OD, at [dcole@informatics.net](mailto:dcole@informatics.net)

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## **FELLOWS OF VOSH/INTERNATIONAL:**

Evaluation questions are now being developed for earning the Fellowship of VOSH/INTERNATIONAL (FVI) designation. Any VOSH'er interested in becoming a candidate should contact Stuart Frank, OD, at [fransb1@medscape.com](mailto:fransb1@medscape.com)

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## **MAKING AN IMPACT:**

Upon her return home from the trip to Ghana, Pennsylvania



## **VOSH NEWSLETTER TRAVELS TO AFRICA:**

While traveling to the clinic site, a Ghanaian optometry student reads the VOSH newsletter that Executive Director Harry I. Zeltzer, OD, handed out. Note that the newsletter can be read/downloaded from our website: [www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org)

University College of Optometry student Carlys Higuchi wrote Dr. Harry Zeltzer the following note:

"This trip to Ghana was such an awesome and life-changing experience for me. Learning about their culture and making friends in Ghana really changed my perspective on a lot of things in life. It's kind of funny because it was harder to adjust back to the American culture than it was for me to adjust to the Ghanaian culture.

I am definitely looking into becoming an active member of VOSH after I graduate from school. I would like to go on more of these humanitarian trips throughout my life. It is such a wonderful feeling to be able to use your knowledge and skill and help change other people's lives."

\* \* \* \* \*

## **OPTOMETRY 2020:**

In August, Executive Director Harry Zeltzer, OD, and president Ruth McAndrews, OD, attended the Optometry 2020 conference. This was the first of three strategic planning meetings sponsored by the AOA to determine the direction of optometry for the year 2020. Conference participants included representatives from each of the states, education, industry and affiliated organizations. The next sessions will be in February and August, 2006.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **UNESCO CONFERENCE ON VISUAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT:**

A number of VOSH leaders turned out for the UNESCO Forum on Visual Health in Central America, held in Fort Lauderdale in May, 2005. As a

result of that meeting, VOSH'er Bruce Moore, OD, of the New England College of Optometry, will lead a research project in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua that is a collaborative endeavor of the UNESCO Chair on Visual Health and Development, the Ministries of Health and Education in each of the countries, along with the Medical Schools and Optometry Schools of each country.

The program is intended to develop effective screening programs, to develop systems for providing care to children in these countries, to improving their training programs, and to providing a model for integrating government, educational systems, health care structures and business interests. See [www.unescovis.org](http://www.unescovis.org)

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CHECK AIRLINE**

**ALLOWANCE AGAIN:** After September 1, 2005, free baggage allowance on some airlines will be reduced from 70# to 50#. Others may follow suit. Better check with your airline before you pack.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DONATIONS IN MEMORY**

**OF OR IN HONOR OF:** Are you celebrating a special birthday, wedding, bar/bat mitzvah or other occasion? Have you thought about asking guests to make a donation in honor of the person instead of bringing a gift? Please consider making V/I the recipient. Contributions can be sent with the person's name and address clearly noted, to V/I, c/o Charles Covington, Secretary-Treasurer, 111 Linda Lane, Lake Mary, FL 32746-4208



**VOSH/INTERNATIONAL** is a voluntary non-profit organization whose primary goal is to facilitate the provision of vision care worldwide to people who can neither afford nor obtain such care.

**VOSH/INTERNATIONAL** accomplishes this goal by service as a coordinating body for affiliated Chapters, by administratively supporting activities of Chapters and members, and by actively promoting the formation of new Chapters and new members.

**VOSH/INTERNATIONAL** is a non-sectarian and non-political organization. Currently there are 32 VOSH Chapters. In addition, there are 22 active student Chapters.

Visit **[www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org)**

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## Upcoming VOSH trips



**MAJOR PLEDGE:** VOSH-IN has been running annual eye clinics in Honduras for 27 years. During this time, team leader Jeff Marshall has collaborated with local activist Ruth Berkling, a dedicated woman who has cobbled together a permanent, full medical clinic in San Pedro Sula. While it is so important to the entire area, the facility has many problems. Recently, Kevin Waltz, MD (above), a dedicated ophthalmologist and VOSH-IN team member who has been performing surgeries there annually, sat down to dinner with Dr. Marshall and pledged \$30,000 to \$50,000 annually until a brand new, state-of-the-art health care facility is built.

Upcoming trips are listed in order by nearest date. Contact trip leader for more information. Several Chapters have their own website. Visit [www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org) for Chapter links as well as a portfolio of photos regarding a number of clinics.

Trip Leaders: Please email your updated trip information to [harryizeltzer@comcast.net](mailto:harryizeltzer@comcast.net) or fill in the form located at the top of the Upcoming Trips page of our website.

■ **TSUNAMI AREA, INDIA, October 21-November 6, 2005**, (V/I)  
Dale Cole, OD, [dcole@informatics.net](mailto:dcole@informatics.net)

■ **CAMBODIA, November, 2005**,  
VOSH-Northwest, [andym@scidpda.org](mailto:andym@scidpda.org)

■ **TACLOBAN LEYTE, PHILLIPINES, November, 2005**, TWECS, BC with Rotary Club of San Juanico, November 10-24, 2005, Marina Roma March, OD, [twecs@sprint.ca](mailto:twecs@sprint.ca)

■ **PETEN, GUATEMALA, November, 2005**, VOSH-PA, Chris Wurst, [Cwurst1@comcast.net](mailto:Cwurst1@comcast.net)

■ **TALARA, PERU, November 5-6**  
VOSH-SOS, Severo Sanchez, OD, [sanchez2102@hotmail.com](mailto:sanchez2102@hotmail.com)

■ **JALPATAGUA, JUTIAPA, GUATEMALA, November 10-20, 2005**,  
VOSH-Ontario, Charlie Davis, OD, [gsears.cdavis@rogers.com](mailto:gsears.cdavis@rogers.com)

■ **ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA, November 12-20, 2005**, VOSH-IL, Al Rosenbloom, OD, [aarlvrpro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aarlvrpro@sbcglobal.net)

■ **SAN LUIS, LIMA PERU, November 19-20**, VOSH-SOS, Severo Sanchez, OD, [sanchez2102@hotmail.com](mailto:sanchez2102@hotmail.com)

■ **LA PERLA-CALLAO, PERU, November 26, 27**, VOSH-SOS, Severo Sanchez, OD, [sanchez2102@hotmail.com](mailto:sanchez2102@hotmail.com)

■ **COYA, PERU, January 6-16, 2006**, VOSH-MI, [scheffod@tds.net](mailto:scheffod@tds.net)

■ **SAN JUAN DEL SUR, NICARAGUA, VOSH-CT, January 7-14, 2006**, Matt Blondin, OD, [mblond2@aol.com](mailto:mblond2@aol.com)

■ **CORN ISLAND, NICARAGUA, January, 2006**, Irving Tanzman, OD, VOSH-NECO, [tanzman@adelphia.net](mailto:tanzman@adelphia.net)

■ **NANDASMO, NICARAGUA: January 14-22, 2006**, VOSH-Northeast, Carl Sakovits, OD, [islanddoc5@aol.com](mailto:islanddoc5@aol.com)

■ **EL FLORON, ECUADOR, January 14-January 22, 2006** VOSH-OH, Barbara Plaughter, [arliss@wcoil.com](mailto:arliss@wcoil.com)

■ **SANTA ANA and SAN MIGUEL, EL SALVADOR, January 27-February 5, 2006**,  
ASARPROSAR/VOSH-NECO, [harryizeltzer@comcast.net](mailto:harryizeltzer@comcast.net)

■ **SOUTHWEST NICARAGUA, February 12-18, 2006**, VOSH-NECO, Jay Jordan, OD, [JFEyecare@aol.com](mailto:JFEyecare@aol.com)

■ **SAN CARLOS, MEXICO, February 17-25, 2006**, VOSH-MI, Jill Cole, [cofamily@chartermi.net](mailto:cofamily@chartermi.net)

■ **SAN CRISTOBAL, MEXICO, February, 17-25, 2006**, VOSH-VA, [dbnclark@verizon.net](mailto:dbnclark@verizon.net)

■ **APOPA and SUCHITOTO, EL SALVADOR, February 18-26, 2006**, "Team Sight and Bite," Jenifer Ambler, OD, [amblerj@sover.net](mailto:amblerj@sover.net)

■ **PANAMA CITY, PANAMA, February 18-27, 2006**, VOSH-KS, Don Kuehn, OD, [dkuehn@mokancomm.net](mailto:dkuehn@mokancomm.net)

■ **GRANADA, NICARAGUA, February 26-March 5, 2006**, VOSH-FL, VOSH-AL, Patti Fuhr, OD, [pfuhr@mindspring.com](mailto:pfuhr@mindspring.com)

**VOSH-NECO IN ARMENIA:** After reading Patti Fuhr's article in the last newsletter regarding her teaching experiences in Peru, team leader Joe D'Amico, OD, looked into arranging to work with Armenian students.

Eight ophthalmology students from the Eighth Clinic in Yerevan seized the opportunity; four assisted at all 6 eye care clinics. At right, two of the women are seen in the village of Glazdor assisting Taline Farra, OD, a professor at the New England College of Optometry.

Both Dr. Farra and Jim Fantazian, OD, (bottom, r with a happy patient) spoke Armenian fluently. Indeed, most of the team had ties to the area, so, to meet so many wonderful people, to have the privilege of serving them, to enjoy dinner in their homes, to witness a professional performance of an opera at the restored opera house, to observe the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, to see Mt. Ararat on a clear day - all this and more made the VOSH-NECO trip one that participants will savor for the rest of their life. Plans are in the works for a team to return to Armenia in September, 2007. Contact [eyedam@aol.com](mailto:eyedam@aol.com) or [FarraT@neco.edu](mailto:FarraT@neco.edu)



■ **JIGAJIGA, ETHIOPIA, March 2006**, VOSH-FL, Charlie Covington, ccovington@cfl.rr.com

■ **TELA, HONDURAS, March 4-11, 2006**, VOSH-IN, Jeff Marshall, OD, drjcm@att.net

■ **KUMASI, GHANA, March 10-28, 2006**, VOSH-NECO, Jay Jordan, OD, jordannigro@metrocast.net

■ **CHILE, March 24-April 4, 2006**, VOSH-KS, Ellis Potter, OD, epotter@iolaks.com

■ **GABON, AFRICA, March, 2006**, VOSH-MN, Kirk Thomas, OD, holeinthe-day@hotmail.com

■ **MATAGALPA AND ESTELI, NICARAGUA, April 1-9, 2006**, VOSH-FL with MI Rotary, Max Bruss, maxobrusso23@msn.com

■ **VALMIERA, LATVIA, May 26-June 7, 2006**, VOSH-MI with MI Lions, Tom Doyle DeWitt, OD, doyle@msu.edu

■ **MALAWI, AFRICA, July, 2006**, VOSH-NW with Rotary/International, dolezal@quik.com

■ **KARATU, TANZANIA, October, 2006**, VOSH-MN, imnod@aol.com

■ **SAN PEDRO SULA, HONDURAS, March, 2007**, VOSH-IN, Jeff Marshall, OD, drjcm@att.net

■ **ARMENIA, late September, 2007**, VOSH-NECO, Joseph D'Amico, OD, eyeclam@aol.com or FarraT@neco.edu

■ **KENYA, AFRICA, November 17-30, 2007**, VOSH-IN, Jeff Marshall, OD, drjcm@at.net

## Join us in Las Vegas in 2006

Already plans are underway for the 2006 Annual Meeting, to be held in conjunction with the AOA meeting in Las Vegas, in June.

We continue to adjust our meeting schedule to reflect the input we receive from our members. Accordingly, the V/I 2006 Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, June 22. Your input, concerns and comments are important to us and we know you will be energized by interacting with other attendees. We look forward to seeing you there. Mark your calendar now.

*Right: No, it isn't a pizza delivery. Immediate Past President Dale Cole, OD, and Harry I. Zeltzer, OD, (R) are making a humanitarian award presentation to Skip Charles (L). The box contains an attractive wall clock with the V/I logo that was made by vision impaired employees of the Lighthouse in Chicago.*



## Software program facilitates dispensing

### V/I Humanitarian-of-the-Year award

Howard "Skip" Charles was invited to talk about the REIMS Eyeglass Inventory Matching System at the V/I Annual Meeting in Texas. Following the presentation, he and the late Phil Richmond, OD, were honored with the V/I Humanitarian-of-the-Year award for their collaborative effort in creating this computer software program. REIMS facilitates the dispensing of recycled glasses on VOSH clinics. It was a Herculean volunteer effort, much appreciated by VOSH volunteers who are now using the computer program.

Skip is a computer expert. On his first VOSH trip to Santa Ana, El Salvador in 1996, he immediately recognized that he could make it easier for untrained volunteers working in the dispensary. Phil provided the technical knowledge needed to create the program. Back home, the two VOSH-NECO volunteers continued to meet weekly for over a year to resolve the myriad of issues involved.

When Skip was nearly finished writing the program in 1997, Phil passed away. In honor of

his friend and colleague, Skip named the program REIMS - the Richmond Eyeglass Inventory Matching System, - then made it available to anyone at no charge.



*The late Phil Richmond, OD*

While the technical aspects are complicated, the program works quite simply. All prescriptions of recycled glasses are first entered into the program and assigned a numerical number. After the patient is seen by the doctor, the dispensary volunteer types the individual's prescription into the computer program which will then provide the best matches available in the inventory for that particular prescription.

Skip continues to volunteer in El Salvador where he implemented the trial project. He continues to refine the REIMS program both from his own experiences as well as from input from others who are using it. He has been generous with his expertise and welcomes inquiries, suggestions, concerns. The latest REIMS program along with a manual are available at no charge by visiting [friendsofASAPROSAR.org](http://friendsofASAPROSAR.org).



**VOSH IN VENEZUELA:** A VOSH-MN team of twenty including 4 ODs and one ophthalmologist traveled to the river city of Puerto Ordaz, Venezuela, in late February, where they saw over 1,700 patients. ODs came from Minnesota, Nevada and Nova Scotia. In-country host was Father Greg Schaffer. Father Schaffer met MN VOSHer and Lion Norm McCarthy 3 years ago at the MN State Fair where he and his choir were performing.

There is over 75% unemployment in this area; even the most basic health care is unavailable so it can be readily understood why crowds swelled to almost unmanageable proportions as word got out about the clinic.

Remaining glasses were left with the local physician who worked with the team all week. He will seek followup care for referrals. ABOVE: Erik Brendtro, OD, examines a patient. Dr. Brendtro was the recipient of a stipend from the Walman foundation. VOSH-MN uses the money to provide travel aid to enlist first-time VOSHers.