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Snapshot Interview

By: Tracey Peterson

Dr. Dan Twelker



This month we wanted to highlight a member of VOSH who is nothing less than deserving of recognition for the work he has done within VOSH and for the challenge of providing quality eye care for those in need, VOSH/International, President Elect, Dr Dan Twelker.



So where did Dr. Dan Twelker's volunteer work start and what inspired him to be such an advocate of VOSH? His involvement began as a student member of the SVOSH chapter of UC Berkeley. While a student Dan participated in two missions to the Philippines; Negros Occidental and Naga City. As a student this work taught him how to perform retinoscopy well and the importance of how the method can determine the spectacle prescription. After graduating from optometry school in 1992, he worked a few years in private practice, but when he received a part time job as a research optometrist in UC Berkeley he enjoyed his research work so much that it eventually led him to his Ph.D at the University of Arizona, Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Science which is where he has worked since 2002 working in the clinic, teaching, and doing clinical research.

He was invited to join a VOSH Arizona mission to Hermosillo, Sonora that began his involvement in VOSH Arizona and eventually led him to take the role as VOSH Arizona President. Dan describes one of his most memorable moments in all his volunteering this way:

"During a VOSH Arizona mission, I examined a relatively young mechanic in Hermosillo, Sonora who had severe cataracts. He was in tears describing how he wanted to feed his family, but could not see well enough to get the job done. I was able to help with spectacles and we put him on a waiting list for cataract list." It's a powerful link to the work VOSH volunteers do and to the impact VOSH has on individuals and their personal livelihood.

However, Dan's work certainly does not stop there. It is within his work and dedication to teaching that Dan further extends the VOSH mission of "providing sustainable vision care development and education". Dan understood early on the importance of teaching optometry students and also utilizing the missions as opportunities to teach optometry students. "Optometry students are the future of vision care in the US and abroad".



In 2015 Dr Twelker became a member of VOSH Corps serving in Kenya as a faculty member at MMUST(Masinade Muliro University of Science and Technology). During his semester teaching at the MMUST optometry school he participated in several clinics and taught optometry seminars in Tanzania, Malawi, and South Africa. Currently Dan is co-chair of the VOSH Corps program which works closely in the recruitment of optometrists with the Brien Holden Vision Institute. Additionally Dan leads VOSH and SVOSH Foreign Chapter Relations and has developed a program in 2018 called the Ambassador Program, promoting optometry skills and screening local populations for refractive error and eye problems. In Ghana, Dan identified the lack of contact lenses available as a critical need and is currently working with acquiring donations and a lab to help remedy the problem.

Dr. Twelker has authored over 35 publications in refereed journals. Much of his work relates to clinical evaluation of pterygium, prevention of amblyopia in children, and myopia management of children.



Outside of all his dedicated work to the industry he still manages to find time to enjoy hanging out with friends, live music shows, hiking, photography, and riding his bicycle. You can also find his published album called "Recycled Love". Dan currently resides in Tucson, Arizona in the Sonoran Desert about an hour away from the international border with Mexico. VOSH is fortunate to have such a dedicated leader and passionate advocate of our organization. Gratitude is certainly extended to all his work on behalf of VOSH.