



Jordan Kassalow
Humanitarian of Year



Bud Falkenhain
Lifetime Achievement



Natalie Venezia
President Circle Award

26th VOSH Annual Meeting

Humanitarian Passion and Information on Full Display in Montreal

From the roll call of its 84 chapters world-wide, to presentations and exchanges of humanitarian endeavors, heartfelt stories, latest information, and opportunities, the VOSH Annual meeting last week in Montreal was brimming with passion in facing the challenges of global eye care. More than one third of the world's population suffers from impaired vision or functional blindness; many, mostly in developing countries, lacking the resources or access to eye care or glasses. VOSH is the largest all-volunteer nonprofit optometric humanitarian and volunteer organization. The VOSH Chapter in Santa Cruz, Quebec, hosted this year's annual meeting.

Highlights of the VOSH annual meeting included presentations of outreach efforts by Andrea Haymore and Kirsten Jones from Essilor Foundation. Essilor Foundation new initiative, "Changing Lives Through Lenses," provides support for domestic communities and later later plans similar international support. VOSH-India President Yogita Rajanghi spoke on the impact on the Current State of Optical Care in India. Vicki Weiss spoke on VOSH Collaboration domestically while , Luigi Bilotto of Brian Holden Vision Institute cited the meeting's theme "United VOSH" for sustainable health. A panel on collaboration with ppthamology discussion was led by Dr.Asa Morton on behalf of HELPS and Surgical Eyecare Expeditions (SEE).

Awards for distinguished service were included Vision Spring founder Jordfan Kassalow. Reminiscing memories as a student VOSH member, Kassalow proudly accepted the Humanitarian of the Year Award. Kassalow was recognized for his dedication and initiatives servicing need for world suffering impaired vision. Vision Spring has provided deeply discounted eye glasses to more than 5 million through training and distribution.

The Harry I. Zeltzer Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dr Bud Falkenheim of VOSH-Missouri for his honor for the 40+ years of dedication to this organization. The second President of VOSH/International in 1981-1983, he helped to form the framework that has propelled VOSH through its chapters and programs to be serve millions through the years. Of his VOSH missions and their impact, Dr. Falkenhain reflected “ A VOSH mission can be a life changing experience, not only for the person receiving the care, but also for the person giving the care.”

Natalie Venezia, exiting Executive Director of VOSH/International, received the President's Circle Award from VOSH/International President Tracy Machinski “for her profound dedication to VOSH/International and a force for moving the organization forward.” Venezia, frequently the voice of VOSH/International, marked her five years as Executive Director with her organizing abilities which saw a plethora of VOSH initiatives including sustainability efforts, information exchanges, branding as well as, and social media and website development, all of which made VOSH increasingly visible internationally as an active force for humanitarian eye care.

Student VOSH Chapter Illinois College of Optometry was announced as the winner of the SVOSH Video Contest. Other exceptional student videos were screened and a panel of SVOSH chapters underscored their many activities and humanitarian contributions.

Five new VOSH/International Board members: were inducted: Craig Bowen OD, Emilee Nehring OD, Tracey Peterson, Mark Rakoczy OD, and Robert Molter Jr. OD, FAAO..

As former Optometry Giving Sight CEO Clive Miller said in a video from Sydney, Australia, the VOSH Annual meetings are “must attend” events. With the theme “BIG Vision: small world”, next years VOSH Annual Meeting will be held October 27, 2019 in Orlando Florida. For more details visit VOSH.org.