
President's Insight

Vision for Global Eye Care: Humanitarianism and Leadership

Héctor Santiago, OD, Ph.D., FAAO



As President of VOSH/International, it fills me with immense pride to address you through this bulletin. Our organization has always stood as a beacon of hope, tirelessly striving to provide humanitarian optometric care to underserved communities worldwide. Yet, our mission extends beyond direct service; we are also deeply committed to fostering the **global leadership** necessary to achieve our overarching goal: **eye care for everyone**.

VOSH/International has consistently been the fertile ground from which both compassionate humanitarians and visionary leaders have blossomed. This was never more evident than at the recent AOA/WCO Fifth World Congress of Optometry held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an event that truly showcased the profound impact and influence of our VOSH family on the international stage.

The Congress served as a powerful platform to recognize the remarkable contributions of individuals within our ranks. We were particularly thrilled to see the American Optometric Association honor **Dr. Tracy Matchinski** with

the prestigious **Dr. Jerry P. Davidoff Vision Care Award**. Dr. Matchinski, a former VOSH/International President and a dedicated faculty advisor to the Illinois College of Optometry SVOSH Chapter, embodies the spirit of selfless service and leadership that defines our organization. Her unwavering commitment to expanding access to eye care is an inspiration to us all.

Further cementing VOSH's legacy of excellence, **Dr. Tim Wingert**, the esteemed Chair of our VOSH/International Education Committee, was deservedly inducted into the **National Hall of Fame**. This recognition is a testament to Dr. Wingert's tireless efforts in advancing optometric education globally and his profound impact on the future of our profession.

The World Council of Optometry also recognized the outstanding contributions of **Dr. Sandra Wang-Harris**, a dedicated faculty advisor for the University of Alabama School of Optometry SVOSH Chapter. She delivered the **Memorial Lecture in Honor of Ms. Karen Sparrow**. Her commitment to nurturing the next generation of optometric humanitarians is truly commendable and vital to our continued success.

Looking ahead, we are incredibly excited to share that on October 7th, **Dr. Greg Pearl**, a distinguished former president of VOSH/International, will be the inaugural recipient of the **Optometry Giving Sight Brian Holden Founders Award**. This well-deserved honor highlights Dr. Pearl's pioneering work and lasting impact on global eye health initiatives, further solidifying VOSH/International's role in shaping the future of optometry.

The pervasive presence and influence of VOSHERS at the Congress extended far beyond these individual accolades. Our members were highly visible through their insightful lectures and impactful posters, demonstrating the breadth and depth of our collective expertise and dedication. We applaud the contributions of **Dr. Tareq Nabhan**, representing the SVOSH University of Missouri College of Optometry, and **Dr. Lori Copilevitz**, our dedicated VOSH Secretary, alongside **Dr. Robert Molter**, both leaders of the impactful VOSH Corps program in Vietnam. Their work exemplifies our commitment to providing direct service and developing sustainable programs.

Furthermore, **Dr. Jeffrey Weaver**, Chair of the VOSH Data and Research Committee, presented crucial findings that will undoubtedly inform our

future strategies. **Dr. Sandra Wang-Harris**, alongside **Dr. Nadiuska Platero** and **Dr. Juan Oliveros** from the University of Las Americas Panama SVOSH Chapter, showcased their invaluable work in fostering student engagement and optometric research. We also commend **Lic. Beatriz Gómez**, a vital Board Member of VOSH/International, and **Dr. Yazan Gammoh**, the dedicated faculty advisor of SVOSH Jordan, for their impactful presentations. Their diverse contributions underscore our global reach and collaborative spirit, which defines VOSH/International.

The success of the Congress truly highlighted the incredible dedication and talent within our VOSH family. It reinforced the notion that our strength lies not only in the individual acts of humanitarianism but also in our collective ability to inspire, educate, conduct research, and lead. We are a community united by a shared purpose: to ensure that access to quality eye care is a reality for everyone, everywhere.

As we continue our vital work, let us draw inspiration from these remarkable individuals and the collective achievements showcased at the Congress. Let us reaffirm our commitment to being both compassionate caregivers and influential leaders, working hand in hand to illuminate the path toward a future where no one is left behind in terms of vision.

Thank you, VOSHERS, for your unwavering dedication and tireless efforts. Together, we can make a difference.

