

## President's Insights December 2022

My first thought was to write about all the successes VOSH has had this year, and there have been many. My second thought was to write about our goals for the coming year. I am going to blame the following on having just finished watching "A Christmas Story Christmas".

As everyone who has been involved in the fifty years of the VOSH movement knows, the work we do takes a bunch of commitment and time. We all lead busy lives. So why do we keep putting in the effort when we could be sitting around watching TV or reading a book?

The answer is obvious to all our amazing volunteers. There is a joy that comes from helping others that far outweighs the labor. Seeing the smile when you put a pair of glasses on a child, and she sees well for the first time. Getting hugged and thanked for the eye exam we just performed. Learning new skills and realizing you can do a quality eye exam in less-than-ideal circumstances. Educating a patient on his glaucoma and knowing that he will be able to maintain healthy vision during his lifetime. Being thanked for the equipment the organization donated that a newly graduated optometrist used to learn her clinical skills. Mentoring students and seeing the joy when they see an optic nerve for the first time. Watching the aha moment in the audience when you are educating others on something you are passionate about, like pediatric exams, or low vision, or retinoscopy, or even hybrid contact lenses. Learning about new cultures and languages. Meeting fellow optometrists from other countries, learning from their resilience to face the challenges to achieve what we consider standard in our professional lives, and realizing that we share our passion for this profession and our commitment to our patients. Realizing that people are inherently kind and appreciative no matter where you travel. Getting to know some of the most wonderful people who volunteer their time and being lucky enough to call many of them friends. The list is endless, and we all feel a bit humbler and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to, share, and learn from volunteering with VOSH.

The organization not only survived the pandemic, but due to the wisdom, insight, and hard work of many, it adapted and thrived by adding new programs and goals. Diversity and Inclusion training demonstrated our commitment to understanding the context for providing compassionate, quality care to anyone in need. It showed us the need to continue learning and challenge our perceptions to put our words into practice. VOSH is making efforts to reach a much wider audience through the addition of simultaneous translation in our events and to renewed outreach to our international chapters. The board of directors, for the first time, includes talented professionals from outside the United States. Our strength in making connections and in working synergistically with other organizations has helped VOSH support research and educational collaborations that will have a long-term impact on optometry globally. Our work has been recognized with awards both in the United States and internationally.

Personally, one of my greatest joys in life is the work I have been privileged to contribute to this organization. As we reflect on the achievements of 2022 and our personal and professional goals for 2023, I am certain you will feel the same joy when thinking about your engagement with VOSH.

Sincerely and Best Regards,

Michael Ciszek, OD, FVI, diplomate ABO  
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