



## January 2024 Newsletter

We start 2024 with important news. Enjoy President Santiago's reflection on equality, equity, and justice. Learn about glaucoma in Haiti. Find out about Maui Jim's donation, the outcome of our fundraising dinner, our ambassador in Ghana, several activities from our partners, and the call for nominations for the Prevent Blindness awards. Enjoy and share your news!!



### President's Insights

President Santiago starts 2024 by reflecting on the implications of equality, equity, and justice in our work.

As VOSHERs, we come in all kinds of flavors. Yet, we have one common mission. It is a belief that all people must have the freedom to see. This statement implies that sight is not a privilege of the few, but the right of everyone.

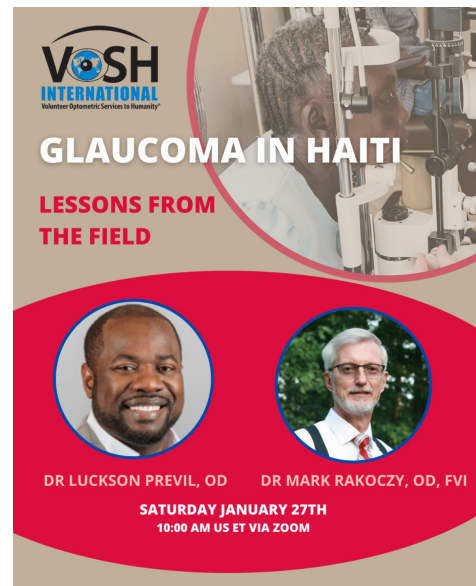
Read the whole article [here](#).

Lea el artículo [aquí](#).

### Do you want to know more about Glaucoma in Haiti?

January is US Glaucoma Awareness Month and also marks Haiti National Independence Day. Join Drs Mark Rakoczy and Dr Luckson Previl to learn about the impact of the "silent thief of sight" as glaucoma is known, in Haiti. From field experience, learn about prevalence, diagnosis tips, and patient management. The Zoom meeting will take place on **Saturday, November 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am US ET.**

You can download the flyer [here](#) and register [here](#).

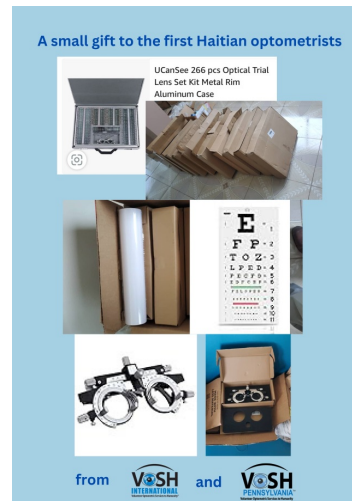


# We want to say thank you

## A great outcome of our fundraising dinner for the Haitian students

Last October 14<sup>th</sup>, our fundraising dinner to support the graduating Haitian students was held in New Orleans. We are delighted to report that for each graduating student still in Haiti we purchased a complete trial lens set of 266 pieces, a Snellen eye chart, and a trial lens frame. The items are already in northern Haiti and we look forward to get them to the students very soon. A big thank you to the 63 Voshers and partners who participated in the dinner and those who supported it afterward.

You can see pictures of the dinner [here](#)



## Maui Jim donates 211,000 optical frames to VOSH/International

At the end of December 2023 VOSH/International and 12 of its US chapters received a donation of 211,256 new optical frames and 16,644 sunglasses clips from Maui Jim. This significant donation will support our mission to offer the gift of vision and quality of eye health worldwide. We are very grateful to [Maui Jim](#), a long-term partner, now integrated into the [Kering Eyewear](#) portfolio. Special thanks to **Frannie Heine and his team** who worked hard to make this donation a reality. THANK YOU!!!!

## News from our chapters

### Another successful collaboration with SUNY

Last January, three VOSH members shared their experiences in organizing vision screenings in Ghana, the Philippines, Kenya and Guatemala. We are very grateful to Drs Kwadwo Akuffo, faculty adviser of SVOSH-KNUST-Ghana, Jennifer L. Vinola, faculty adviser of SVOSH-MCU- the Philippines and Nelson Edwards, board member of VOSH-MI for participating and to Drs Joy Harewood -SUNY's Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and Vicki Weiss, Vice President of VOSH/International for organizing it.





Dr Larcabal at KNUST in Ghana

## VOSH Ambassador visits SVOSH-KNUST-Ghana

Dr John Larcabal, OD visited the school of optometry at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana. He lectured the graduating classes on performing eye exams on children, school vision screenings, and various practice management topics. He also met with the 1st year students to discuss the benefits of practicing optometry and the wonderful things they'll be able to accomplish. With the SVOSH-KNUST chapter, vision screenings were performed at two different schools. The goal is to establish regular school screenings in the surrounding area. Students who need it will receive a comprehensive free eye exam at the KNUST optometry school. Dr Larcabal took some donated equipment for the school. This work will continue. Thanks, John!!!!

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VOSH-CT team in San Juan del Sur



Dr Blondin, VOSH-CT and Dr Mercado, SVOSH-UNAN in Managua



## VOSH-CT completes another successful clinic in Nicaragua

Marking its 20th humanitarian clinic in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, the VOSH-CT team led by Dr. Matthew Blondin and Attorney Audrey Blondin saw 3,743 patients in over four days of work. Each patient received an eye examination, eyeglasses, medication as needed, sunglasses, and other items. The team comprised 38 members including 13 optometrists, 12 optometry students, 2 opticians, several optical assistants, translators, and helpers. Dr. Blondin was bitten by an insect, his leg was successfully treated by Nicaraguan sponsor Dra. Rosa Elena Bello. Before leaving Nicaragua, VOSH-CT donated a bag of plano frames to SVOSH-UNAN for their humanitarian work.



## SVOSH-KYCO President joins the Women in Optometry Student Advisory Board

Deanna Dale, president of SVOSH-KYCO joined the WO Student Advisory Board. The Board will provide suggestions and feedback to the WO team. Congratulations Deanna. More information [here](#).

## Two SVOSH chapters collaborate on research on Refractive Error among Panamanian indigenous people. In Spanish

Las escuelas de optometría de la Inter American University of Puerto Rico y la Universidad Especializada de las Américas trabajaron en una investigación sobre la prevalencia de los errores refractivos y la discapacidad visual en el pueblo indígena Guna en Panamá. Los resultados se presentaron en la reunión de la American Academy of Optometry en octubre del 2023. La revista Franja Visual ha perfilado este trabajo en su [edición de enero de 2024](#). El artículo también se puede descargar [aquí](#). Felicidades SVOSH-IAUPR y SVOSH-UDELAS. Congratulations!

**SAUD PÚBLICA**  
**PRIMER ESTUDIO DE ERRORES REFRACTIVOS E IMPEDIMIENTOS VISUALES EN POBLACION INDIGENA DE PANAMA**

El primer estudio de errores refractivos y de discapacidad visual en una población indígena de Panamá se realizó en colaboración con los investigadores del programa de Optometría de la Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, en colaboración con los investigadores del programa de Optometría de la Universidad Especializada de las Américas. El estudio se realizó en el pueblo indígena Guna en Panamá. Con un 12.5% de la población total de Panamá siendo indígena, la investigación se centró en los Guna, el mayor grupo étnico originario de ese país.

El estudio se realizó entre mayo y septiembre de 2022 y los resultados se presentaron en una conferencia y taller durante el 11er Simposio Internacional de Optometría del American College of Optometry el pasado 12 de octubre de 2023.

Se documentó una prevalencia del 43.5 % de impedimentos visuales y del 2.5 % de errores refractivos documentados en una población indígena. Señala el Dr. Hector Sorrogo, director del proyecto, la Dra. Daniela Angulo, co-directora de la investigación, destacó que se encontró una prevalencia de miopía del 40.3% (excluyendo aquellos que a menor o igual a -0.50 D) y 34.5% de astigmatismo (algunos que a menor o igual a -0.75 D). Los errores refractivos fueron el grupo de diagnóstico de 21 (50.00%) de los 42 errores refractivos documentados en una población indígena. Solo en 14.4% fueron errores refractivos que se requirieron de atención correctiva de la miopía, y aquellos que no requirieron fueron tratados como cargas de contacto, lentes y tratamiento de condiciones oculares como astigmatismo.

El Dr. Sorrogo indicó que uno de los objetivos del estudio fue dar lugar de la colaboración con amigos, lo cual resultó en un resultado visual fue de 13.8%, una reducción de más del 70%. Este resultado señaló que la cooperación de los impedimentos visuales en su entorno refuerza los resultados.

La Dra. Neidy Rojas y el Dr. Juan Olivares co-investigadores de la Universidad de las Américas de Puerto Rico, fueron los primeros investigadores de ese país en presentar un resultado de un impedimento visual en un estudio de errores refractivos de una población indígena. El grupo de investigación incluyó también a la Dra. Neidy Rojas, Dra. Lidia Chaves y el Dr. Carlos González. Otros investigadores de Puerto Rico fueron la Dra. Neidy Rojas, Dr. Luis Ruiz, Dr. Angel Romero y la Dra. Karen CA.

El estudio fue apoyado por fondos de la Fundación para el Cuidado de la Salud Ocular (FCSO), VOSH/International y varias organizaciones internacionales.

**Para más información, contacto:**  
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## News from our partners

**Nominations for the 2024 Jenny Pomeroy Award and the 2024 Rising Visionary Award are open.**



The nominations for the “2024 Jenny Pomeroy Award for Excellence in Vision and Public Health,” and the fifth annual “Rising Visionary Award” are open. The submission deadline for both awards is **Monday, Feb. 5, 2024**, at noon ET.

The Jenny Pomeroy Award for Excellence in Vision and Public Health is presented annually to an individual, group, or organization that has made significant contributions to the advancement of public health related to vision and eye health at the community, state, national, and/or international level. VOSH/International was the proud recipient of the award in 2022.

The Rising Visionary Award is presented to a student or resident in a health-related field who submits the best overall application and essay addressing the 2024 theme, “Being Seen and Heard.”.

Do not forget to make a nomination for these important awards. More information is available [here](#).

## Request for assistance

### Help needed in Honduras

[Honduras Ministries](#) is a 501c3 operating out of Overland Park, KS. Their main program is the Child Enrichment Program to provide medical and dental care for Honduran children and their families. They work in Choluteca, Honduras.



They are looking for partners to offer eye exams for the children and parents they work with. If your chapter is interested, please contact Jim Martin at 913.274.5700 or [jim.martin@hondurasministries.org](mailto:jim.martin@hondurasministries.org)

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