

Bring the world into focus . . .

# VOSH-Indiana Chapter

Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity  
www.vosh-indiana.org



## Through the eyes of SVOSH- University of Houston School of Optometry

A record number of Optometry school students participated in the February 2003 mission to Honduras. In addition to 10 students from the University of Houston, 10 from the Illinois College of Optometry, and three students from the Netherlands got their first taste of Optometry third world style. From the UHCO SVOSH newsletter:

### Lake Yojoa, Honduras was a success!

Ten UHCO students participated in a Honduras vision service trip to Lake Yojoa with VOSH Indiana. The group consisted of about 80 volunteers, including students, optometrists, opticians and a medical team. Over 3,500 patients were seen, and about 30 cataract surgeries were performed. Several patients were referred for ongoing care in Honduras.

Jeff Marshall, OD, president of VOSH Indiana, has



Back row left to right - Soroush Azadi, Annela Arrendondo, Amanda Hunt, Jeff Marshall, Sumant Malhotra, Lisa Ostrin, Armanae Mancha. Front row left to right, Shilpa Patel, Arun Subramanian, Rita Shah, Landon Jones.

invited UHCO students to join his group for several years. Ruth Berkling runs a permanent clinic in Honduras. She has been working with the VOSH IN group since 1978 when VOSH IN went on its first trip there.

Students were able to participate in every step of the exam process, starting with setting up the clinic. Each day students rotated through a different station, including refraction, internal exam, dispensary and surgery. Several ocular conditions were observed among the patient population. We found malignant melanoma, toxoplasmosis, traumatic injury, and retinoblastoma. Hundreds of spectacles were provided to the patients.

Everyone worked really hard, learned a lot and had a great time! 2004's mission to Honduras is tentatively planned for February 11-18.

### Annela's Experience

By Annela Arrendondo, OPTIII

During this year's Honduras mission, we helped nearly 4,000 people. As we arrive at the work site at 6:30 a.m. lines of people awaited our arrival. It was amazing. People traveled miles on foot, horses, and by bike to have a chance to be examined. I will never forget the look on their faces when many could see for the very first time. It was beautiful. The entire time I just kept thinking this is exactly why I entered the field of optometry. These



were people who led the simplest lives, yet in my eyes, were indeed the richest people I've ever encountered. They were so appreciative. I will never forget my 9 year old patient who hugged me and said, "Thank you. Now I can see all the way to the end of the country!" Then there was Elena who had just had cataract surgery and said, "God bless all of you for remembering and serving Honduras. You are all angels." These people left their footprints all over my heart and I will never forget them.

I was saddened as our Honduras mission came to an end. It was such an addicting experience - it left me wanting to do more and more. I met some wonderful people. Throughout the mission I kept thinking how the most amazing things can be accomplished when God brings people to work together. This rewarding experience has changed my life in the most profound way. It might seem silly thinking that one week can have such an impact, but it is almost impossible for me to explain in words. I can't wait to go on my next mission.



## Helping those in need

By Arun T. Subramanian, OPTIII

When someone asks why you decided to become an optometrist, an obvious response would be to improve the quality of people's lives.

We know we accomplish this with each patient encounter in the clinic. The people who come to the school are in need of eyecare. Regardless of their financial status, they receive superior care, using the most modern technologies. What about those living in countries lacking sufficient healthcare resources? That is where we, as future optometrists can step in. My recent trip to Honduras to provide eye care to those in need revealed to me how a simple pair of spectacles can change the life of a high myope who had been walking around for years without any correction. Or, the case of a two year old

who was diagnosed with retino-blastoma. The child will lose his eyesight, but hopefully treatment will save his life. If it weren't for the screenings we provide, the people in the region would have little chance of receiving eye care.

Although we were there only a week, we screened almost 3,500 people. We provided most with a pair of spectacles or sunglasses, while dispensing artificial tears, antibiotics or steroids to those who needed it. Those individuals who had several bilateral cataracts received surgical cataract removal. In many cases, we simply gave them peace of mind that they had no visual problems.

As a student it is an invaluable experience to see pathology and conditions which

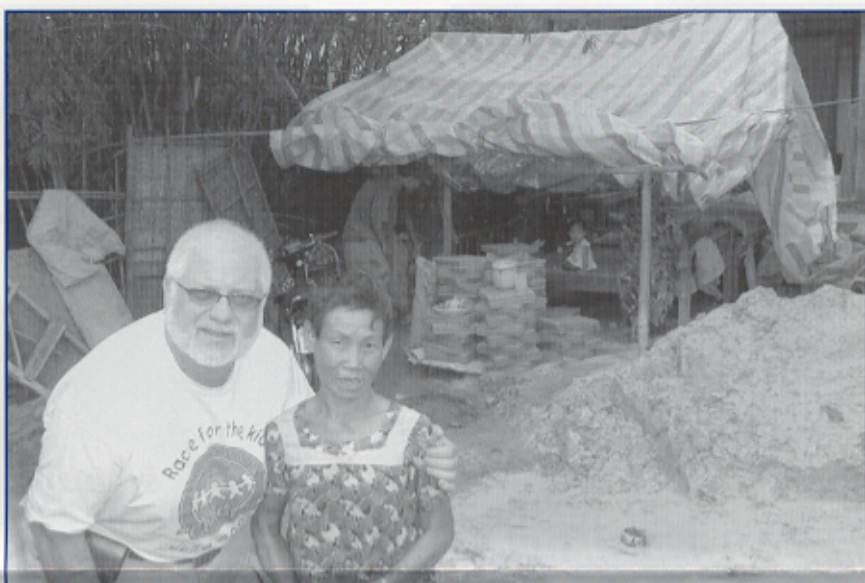


will rarely present here at the UEI. Considering this, the money and time spent away from school are well worth it. As a practicing optometrist, it may seem that giving up a week's worth of time and income would be a large sacrifice to make. However, the feeling you get from your desire to help people is priceless. An experience like this really opens your eyes, and as a health care provider, can **change** people's lives. I encourage everyone to go on such a trip either as a student or after graduation. It is a memorable experience that will always remind you of why you chose to become an optometrist.

## Vietnam 2002

September 19, 2002, thirty-one VOSH-Indiana/Ambassadors for Children volunteers departed for Ho Chi Minh City, aka Saigon. The group included two Vietnam War veterans, one Vietnamese Army veteran and a lot of curious volunteers.

In an effort to avoid problems in customs the medical supplies and the library of glasses were packed in canvas duffel bags. About 20% of the duffels had been screened and allowed through when one of the agents noticed all the pieces packed in similar bags. At that point, our passage ground to a halt. Even



*This was the home this Vietnamese widow lived in until each of the VOSH team donated \$100 to have a new home built for her. Two homes were built for war widows during this mission.*

though all the paperwork was in order, the rest of our supplies were held. It took three days of negotiations to finally get our supplies. It was fortunate our tour operator was able to go to "Plan B" immediately. We simply did our 3 days of touring before we did the mission part of our trip.

We worked in a hospital in Don Nai Province. We were greeted by the director of the hospital and most of the staff. They presented each of us with a bouquet of flowers. Following a brief ceremony,

we put these bouquets on the grave of the Catholic priest who had founded the hospital.

For the next three days we provided eyecare to almost 2000 patients. It was obvious that these people held no ill feelings toward this group of Americans who had come to help them. In addition to providing eyecare, our group contributed enough money to build two small houses for the widows of war veterans.



*Manh Vo (fitting the glasses) was an officer of the Vietnamese Army. This was his first trip back to Vietnam since the war. It has only recently become safe for him to return.*

*In addition to working on the mission, he had the opportunity for an emotional reunion with his family.*





*Dr. Jeff Marshall accepts a Lifetime Achievement Award.*

## Two Lifetime Achievement Awards Presented

*by Jeffrey C. Marshall, OD*

One of the pleasures of being President of VOSH-Indiana is occasionally presenting Life Achievement Awards to people who have for many years made VOSH a major part of their life. This year the award was presented to Bob and Shirley Merriam for over 20 years of dedication to helping the people of the world see better.

I didn't know or anticipate that Ruth Berling of VOSH-Honduras was also planning a Lifetime Achievement award presentation in the name of both VOSH-Indiana and VOSH-Honduras. The second award was presented to me, and I'm proudly displaying it in a conspicuous place in my office. It caught me totally off guard and for the first time in a long time...I was speechless!



## A Trick Changes Two Lives

Mike and Verla (called "V") Farrar, co-owners of Farrar Electric, have been patients of Dr. Jeff Marshall since the early 1970's. Little did they know that a simple visit to the doctor for their annual eye exam would be a life changing experience.

Mike and V were invited to join Jeff on a diving vacation off the coast of Honduras. It was an invitation with a catch. The catch was that they first had to work on a VOSH mission in Honduras the first week, then go to the Bay Islands for the second week to dive. They accepted, and it was turned out to be a vacation that would change their lives. They've not missed a mission since the first one.

Mike is now the resident mission electrician and V's organizational abilities placed her in charge of the dispensing area. Together, their years of experience and dedication has made a wonderful addition to VOSH missions.

## Upcoming missions Honduras Kenya

**February 11 to 18, 2004**

**Kenya**

**November 20**

**to December 4, 2004**

Contact Jeffrey C. Marshall, OD 317-357-8534  
drjcm@att.net

## Our Parting Shot



*If you are interested in seeing the world, do it on a VOSH mission. Viet Nam was an amazing way to enjoy another culture and serve those who need your help.*