



## Labine Honored as VOSH Humanitarian of the Year

The V/I Humanitarian of the Year award is presented annually to honor an individual who has distinguished him or herself by bringing eye care to underserved populations. This year we recognized Fr. Pierre Labine of Montreal, Canada (VOSH-Santa Cruz).

Pierre joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross Fathers and became an ordained priest in 1985. He worked for 12 years as a chaplain of a secondary school in Ontario before returning to the Oratory.

His interest in eye care was sparked in Brazil when he observed at a youth center in Santarem that no children were wearing glasses because they could not afford them.

In 1999, some of his former students who had become optometrists spoke to him about a humanitarian aid project in Puerto Escondido, Mexico.

With that, the first group of Holy Cross volunteers provided eye care and glasses to 1800 villagers. In 2006, his group became VOSH-Santa Cruz. Pierre estimates that since 1999, he and his eye care teams have provided eye care to more than 130,000 patients.

As a visionary leader, a generous man, and a passionate volunteer, Pierre strives to improve the efficiency of the preparation and progress of his VOSH missions in order to provide eye care to more people.

## Past, Present and Future

*By Ellis Potter, OD, FVI*

*President of VOSH/International*



Past, Present, and Future was the theme for the 2012 VOSH/International Annual meeting. We celebrated the past by recognizing our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday since Dr. Franklin Harms conceived of the idea of helping the unfortunate in third world countries to obtain eye care.

We examined the present and the limitations to the service that we provide. We learned that while there are challenges to our current modes of delivery, with thought and foresight we can work around them to further our objectives and promote our organization.

We looked forward to the future by previewing a number of ideas that each chapter and volunteer could consider. These range from a learning of the abilities of host clinics in Columbia and other countries, VOSH's involvement in Haiti to a review of how our members have participated in domestic eye care clinics.

We also had a number of workshop and discussion groups where ideas were exchanged. The topics: Moving from recycled to new glasses, fundraising, thinking out of the box for VOSH care and the sharing of same country experiences.

Change is difficult! Nobody is ready for it! We're more comfortable doing things the same way! But change is inevitable. It will happen whether we like it or not. It will happen whether we are prepared for it or not!

Preparing for change was part of the focus for the 2012 Annual meeting; to think of ways to improve our mode of delivery and care. To elaborate on what our chapters are doing to prepare for the future and what are they are doing to meet the different challenges. In many respects Dr. Harms' dream seems like a fantasy but it's TRUE. It's hard to believe that VOSH humanitarian efforts, starting from one man's dream, have succeeded in helping 5-6 million people.

In the 40 years since the founding of VOSH, conditions, goals and ideas have changed! Will VOSH change?



*Right: A student from NOVA Southeastern University College of Optometry student examines a child in Ecuador.*

## New VOSH/International Team Members

Several new faces were welcomed onto the V/I administrative team. Left to right: Dr. Lis Faulstich (Public Relations), Mel Muchnik, PhD (Communications Officer), Dr. Barry Leonard (Treasurer), Dr. Tracy Matchinski (Director), Dr. Ellen Weiss (Director), Dr. David Stacy (Director), and Dr. Marcela Frazier (Director, not pictured). Dr. Mike DeRosier and Dr. James Vaught were thanked for their dedication and service as they retired from the board.



Left to Right: Clive Miller, Dr. John Spencer, Dr. Ruth McAndrews, Deborah Wright-DeMaderios, Dr. Les Walls, Dr. Greg Pearl, Dr. Ellen Weiss, Dr. David McPhillips, Dr. Mel Muchnik, Dr. Barry Leonard, Dr. Lisbeth Faulstich, Dr. David Stacy, Dr. Dale Cole, Dr. Tracy Matchinski, Natalie Venezia, Esq., Dr. Harry Zeltzer, Dr. Ellis Potter. Not pictured: Dr. Marcela Frazier, Todd Fleischer, John Gehrig, Esq. To view bios see <http://vosh.org/home/who-are-we>.

## VOSH Sponsors:

*A special thank you to the following organizations for their support of VOSH/International:*

- OptometryGivingSight
- Walman Optical
- Esther Kahn Foundation
- Cleinman Performance Partners
- Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc.
- Essilor
- National Vision
- Vistakon



## Fellow of VOSH/International: Dr. David McPhillips

Dr. Dave McPhillips is the newest Fellow of VOSH/International.

The Fellowship of VOSH International acknowledges the skills and experience necessary for a member of VOSH to give advice on the global challenge of preventable blindness; to foster the development of future leaders to meet the challenge of VISION 2020; and to prepare individuals who may be asked to consult with governmental agencies, educational, private, or public institutions, and the media on issues related to the mission of V/I. Following a review of his/her qualifications the candidates then pass written and oral examinations. There are now 24 Fellows of VOSH International (FVI).

Please visit [www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org) to see the requirements and to apply.

## New VOSH Chapters

New chapters affiliated with colleges of optometry are:

- Incarnate Word
- University of Gander Ethiopia
- University of Trinidad and Tobago
- FUAA Colombia
- University El Bosque Colombia.

Provisional state and regional chapters include:

- Texas
- Puerto Rico
- Oklahoma
- Alberta Canada

*Left: Dr. Les Walls leads discussion during a breakout group at the VOSH/International Annual Meeting, which took place October 27-28, 2012 in Phoenix.*



## National Recognition of Optometry in Argentina

By Dr. Laura Elisa Brusi, La Plata University



September 17 was historic for optometry as a science and as a profession; because not only was it officially recognized by the federal government of Argentina, but the decision also renewed our commitment as teachers, professionals and citizens to work hard for our people, especially for those which are still excluded from the health visual system.

Argentina has 40 million inhabitants according to the 2010 census and the Ministry of Health has reported that 34.8% of the population depends only on the public health system, and 9.1% of them are still unemployed. The 2010 V2020 report shows that under the main causes of avoidable functional blindness, uncorrected refractive error takes second place. Optometry is a major contributor to primary care and eye health.

This social and health reality is being repeated over and over across Latin America. Besides being statistical indicators, in real life those numbers represent people; people who have the same rights as we have: right to sight, schooling, employment, and decent welfare of their families.

Eleven years ago La Plata University created the Degree of Ocular Optics and Optometry, a five-year program that has since graduated 7 classes. With the help of OptometryGivingSight and V/I, they will soon open their new Vision Center. Thank you for the effort in pursuing the VOSH TTP for Argentina. V/I President Ellis Potter said, "We celebrate this significant step for our optometry colleagues in Argentina. We also hope that this donation of clinic instruments to Argentina's only optometry school will support our shared goals of building the optometric capacity of that country."

## Finding Barahona's Hero

Inter-American University, Puerto Rico School of Optometry

See <http://vosh.org/schools-p-z> for full text and photos

When we first stepped foot outside customs in the Dominican Republic, we were greeted by a gentleman with the most kindly smile. Lewis told us stories of how he has helped children throughout Barahona, his hometown; get everything from uniforms for school to food to survive. In Barahona, we were greeted by more of the most caring, warm-hearted smiles I could have ever imagined. Each patient was thankful for our care. Each conversation always started with that smile, and ended leaving each and every one of the SVOSH members touched at the heart and inspired by the mind. By *Dominique M. Oker (third year student)*

The people of Barahona and their unforgettable smiles humbled me beyond words. Watching the joy of putting on a pair of glasses for the first time to see the world around them in a way they have never seen it before, made me realize how much I can change a person's quality of life as an optometrist and reinforced my love for optometry. By *Pariya Shamsae (third year student)*

## Optometry Teaching Laboratory in Nicaragua

Optometry Giving Sight is pleased to announce that a new teaching laboratory was inaugurated at the Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) thanks to funds provided by Optometry Giving Sight through its partnership with VOSH/International. It has 3 full lanes and 10 practice refraction lanes.

"The impact this teaching laboratory will have on current and future generations of Nicaraguans in need of vision care is almost incomprehensible," said Dr. Roger Juarez. Dr. Juarez was lead advisor on the development of the program curriculum for the UNAN School of Optometry, which is now in its second year of operation. UNAN currently has about 28 first year and 28 second year students.

## Nicaragua Presbyopia Study

Dr. Larry Hookway, Prasad Ramson, Dr. Nelson Rivera, and Dr. Kovin Naidoo presented a poster at the American Academy of Optometry on their presbyopia study in Nicaragua. Nicaragua is the poorest country in Latin America, second only to Haiti in the Western Hemisphere. The 2011 GNP per capita was estimated at \$3,200. By comparison Mexico is \$14,800 and the US is \$49,000. More than 46% are below the poverty line. The World Health Organization estimates that 153 million people are visually impaired due to uncorrected refractive error. It estimates that 517 million are visually impaired due to uncorrected presbyopia.

In this study, anyone over age 34 with unaided near vision equal to or worse than 20/40 were considered presbyopic. The study concluded approximately 81% of people in Nicaragua that are visually impaired at near due to uncorrected presbyopia do not have the spectacles that they need. Affordable spectacle lens options and increased manpower to examine eyes will be needed to elevate the problem. The study was funded by OptometryGivingSight.

Dr. Hookway estimated that it would take almost 400 VOSH clinics, each seeing 2500 people over the age of 34 to address the need of Nicaragua alone.

## VOSH Ophthalmic Equipment and Supplies

- VOSH/Southeast has frames, sunglasses, single vision readers, single vision minus, and pre-made bifocals. Contact [maxobrusso23@msn.com](mailto:maxobrusso23@msn.com).
- Heart to Heart, an NGO in Olathe, KS that supports worldwide health endeavors; has ophthalmic items at extremely reasonable prices. Examples:

- Welch Allyn Ophthalmoscopes and Retinoscopes, approximately \$100.
- Welch Allyn Hand Held Auto Refractors at about \$690.

If you are interested and will certify that the equipment is used for mission trips, primarily outside of the United States, call for information: Brian Scheel 913-538-7931 or 913-764-5200.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL is a voluntary non-profit organization whose primary goal is to facilitate the provision of vision care worldwide to people who neither can afford nor obtain such care.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL accomplishes this goal by serving as a coordinating body for affiliated chapters. It provides administrative support of chapter activities. It also provides promotional opportunities to encourage the formation of new chapters and recruitment of new members.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL is a non-sectarian and non-political organization. Currently there are 33 independent chapters and 24 university-affiliated chapters.

[www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org)

**VOSH/INTERNATIONAL**  
Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity



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