

VOSH

Feb. 25th – March 1st, 2007

Baja California Sur

In the Fall of 2006 Hermosa Beach Sister City Association and Manhattan Beach Sister City Association agreed to jointly fund a Volunteer Optometric Society Humanity (V.O.S.H.) campaign in the areas around their sister cities. The Hermosa Beach Sister City is Loreto, Mexico and the Manhattan Beach Sister City is Santa Rosalia, Mexico. The help of two private donors made this VOSH campaign feasible and therefore a team of coordinators was assembled:

- ❑ Deborah Wright, VOSH director and trip organizer (HBSCA contact)
- ❑ Mariano V. Translator and coordinator (MBSCA contact)
- ❑ Tirso, Civil Protection Manager, logistic coordinator in Baja Sur (MBSCA contact)
- ❑ Dr. Tani Collins, Loreto City Council, coordinator in Loreto (HBSCA contact)

Target areas:

The sheep ranchers who live in the remote areas of Baja Sur have little to no access to eye care. The California VOSH organization wanted to setup remote clinics that were accessible for these ranchers and their families. “Albergues” are centralized shelter/boarding schools for the children of those families that live several hours away in various remote locations. Therefore the children live at the school during the week and return to their homes on the weekends. The Albergues proved to be the perfect place to setup our mobile eye clinics.



Driving deep into the mountains of Baja Sur to reach the Albergues remote locations.

We split up into two mobile clinics that went to four unique Albergues in total:

San Jose – Clinic 1

Mulege – Clinic 1

San Ignacio – Clinic 2

Santa Agueda – Clinic 2



The VOSH team:

Doctors:

- Dr. Wills Vanray – lead Doctor
- Dr. Brian Culligan
- Dr. Cindy Yang

3rd year optometry students:

- Vanessa Shaw-McMinn
- Jennifer Jung
- Melissa Bersamina
- Tram Ho
- Minh Le

2nd year optometry students:

- Andrea Hands

Kathryn Albergate – Translator & patient intake coordinator

Deborah Wright - Trip planner and program manager

Equipment:

- Portable Phoropters with stands – 4
- Projectors - 4
- Handheld Auto Refractor - 1
- Laser pointers - 4
- Eye Charts – 4
- Frames – 800
- Reading Glasses – 500
- Exam Cards – 200 per day
- Extension cords
- Power Strips
- Miscellaneous office supplies

Each student brought:

- Re-chargeable hand tools, cover paddle, penlight, PD rulers
- Trial lenses - 4 sets

Medicine:

- Topical antibiotics
- Dilation/cycloplegic drops
- Anesthetic
- Florus strips

Eye manual reference book

Spanish / English eye care book

Sorting and categorizing the frames & readers before the trip





Equipment being loaded into the back of the bus in Loreto



At each Albergues we setup the following stations:

Station 1: Reception area / patient in-take



Tram

Station 2: Visual Acuity



Minh tests the visual acuity of the cook from the Mulege Albergue



Jennifer



Tram – having patient test her corrected vision with trial frames at the Visual Acuity Station

Station 3: Refracting



Dr. Brian Culligan



Dr. Wills Vanray



Melissa

Station 4: Dispensing



Vanessa helps patient select frames



Results:

Each VOSH clinic averaged about 125 patients per day. Total patients examined: 500

Each day we traveled to an Albergue and setup the clinic. After setup, we screened the school children right away. The following day we screened the local ranchers, teachers and employees of the Albergues. By 2 pm each afternoon we packed-up our equipment and then we were transported to the next Albergue.

Total number of reading glasses dispensed: 150

Total number of prescription glasses: 95

Total number of patients referred for surgery: 19

Expense:

Lenses: \$1,000

Labor for edging the lenses: \$480

Reading glasses: \$150

Frames: \$570

Medicine: \$300

Airport charges for luggage (12 pieces): \$100

Boarding costs: \$700*

Miscellaneous: \$200. (Patient cards, pens, rubber bands, duct tape, power strips, extension cords, gasoline, plastic bins)

** Delta Airlines delayed the flight from LAX to Loreto. Students didn't arrive until 8:30 PM on Sunday night. Too late to drive to Santa Rosalia. Also, the customs office delayed the release of our equipment for 1 ½ days. Had to get the Loreto Mayor's office involved to get our equipment released.*

Conditions:

Chronic conditions we see in Baja Mexico are dry eyes and pterygiums (from sun damage). Moisture drops are handed out until we run out. VOSH recently established a contact with a retailer who will sell us sunglasses for 60 cents a pair. The next VOSH campaign to Baja will include sunglasses.

A majority of the patients over 40 needed reading glasses. Over the counter reading glasses are not readily available in Baja like in the U.S. And it is especially difficult for those who live in the mountains on ranches. One man drove 5 hours on a dirt road just to get a pair of reading glasses!

Conclusion:

One of the missing links in the entire patient exam process is the ability to see the patient through to surgery when necessary. During this VOSH campaign a total of 19 patients required surgery. Prior to this VOSH trip we contacted an ophthalmologist in Loreto, Dr. Juan Manuel Garcia Gil. We expressed a need for a doctor who would be willing to see our referrals and charge them on a "sliding scale" according to their economic need. VOSH provided Dr. Gil a medical history report and results of the eye exams for 19 patients. Many of the patients don't have phones and transportation to Loreto is difficult. VOSH will follow up with Dr. Gil to see if any of the referrals we sent were able to follow through with surgery.



95 pairs of glasses with cases were hand carried

back down to Baja California Sur for distribution
one month later



Mayor Rudolfo Davis of Loreto presented the VOSH team with a plaque in recognition of work we did in the Baja Sur area

Miscellaneous pictures of the VOSH team in action:



Tram Ho



Dr. Cindy Yang



Minh Le



Minh Le



Andrea Hands consulting a patient



Jennifer Jung with patient



We received special permission from the Albergue Directors to be able to sleep in the dorms with the children



Tram, Minh and Jennifer with their “bunk-mates”



Dr. Yang with her “bunk mate”





Each Albergue fed us very well. In San Jose we were treated to homemade goat cheese from a local rancher!



In Mulege we were treated with fresh scallops from the Sea of Cortez. They were served raw with lemon, salt, pepper and of course hot sauce. It was very tasty!



When we arrived at the Albergue in San Jose the children were practicing their Folklorico dancing.



The Directora (in the middle) of the Albergue in San Jose was a tremendous help to our VOSH team



The Directors (front & center) of the Albergue in Mulege were a tremendous help to our VOSH team. This Albergue was hit very hard during Hurricane John (Labor Day weekend '06). Fortunately it was on a weekend and the children were back on their ranches with their families. However it took months to cleanup the mud and destroyed items.



VOSH team in Santa Agueda



Andrea, Kathryn, Vanessa, Melissa



Dr. Culligan and Dr. Vanray after a week on this VOSH campaign