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Rotary International 2001-2002

Avoidable Blindness

"Next to life itself, God's most precious gift is sight - Protect it, Save it, Restore it."

Task Force

'Beam of Hope' Offers Help for Diabetics in Fiji

The following was submitted by Dr Malcolm Tester, a Rotarian from the Summerland Sunrise club, District 9640.

I am chairman of 3H grant 99-13. This project named Beam of Hope aims to reduce diabetes related blindness in Fiji. Like many Pacific Island nations, indigenous Australians and some native Americans, 30% of Fijian people have diabetes, a disease which is the world's most common cause of blindness in people under age 60. Diabetics are 30 times more likely to become blind than non diabetics and diabetes is one of the world's most rapidly increasing diseases. As an Australian ophthalmologist I have worked voluntarily in Fiji for 20 years and in 1996 undertook a study which revealed that over 60% of diabetics in Fiji suffered potentially blinding diabetic retinal disease and that 50% of those afflicted were already blind or suffering partial loss of vision.

Prevention of diabetic blindness is relatively simple; ie reduce blood sugar levels and undergo regular eye screening. The only treatment able to control diabetic retinal disease is with an ophthalmic laser, an instrument found in almost all ophthalmologists offices in the Western world. In Fiji in 1996 no such facility existed. Diabetics simply went blind. A similar situation exists in like nations. In 1998 Summerland Sunrise launched the Beam of Hope Project obtained a 3h grant and established Fijis first laser clinic, trained doctors to use the lasers and commenced a program of public education as well as sending teams of volunteers to Fiji to assist in screening clinics aimed at discovering those in need

of laser treatment.

It is a disappointment to me that diabetic blindness, probably the world's third leading cause of preventable blindness never seems to rate a mention in RI publications. I have communicated details of our project to various task force leaders, to dispense information and seek support but we seem to remain perpetually unacknowledged. While cataract is the leading curable cause of blindness, perhaps because cataract surgery is now such a simple and cheap procedure it presents few challenges and therefore is the most commonly adopted form of voluntary service. Would it not be possible for our work to be publicized? We have almost exhausted our HHH funds but there are still many years of work to be done if we are to prevent up to 20% of a nation's population from succumbing to preventable blindness.

Having said this, I offer my congratulations and thanks to all those Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers who participate in these sight saving humanitarian activities throughout the third world.

Email: ytester@lis.net.au



District 7390 Actively Involved in Projects

The following correspondence is from Albert A. Alley, M.D., Area J Coordinator for the ABTF

Dear Frank & Doyle,

I wanted to inform you that a team from district 7390 returned home last week, after completing an eye surgical mission to the Dominican Republic. During this rotary year, Rotarians from district 7390 completed four eye surgical missions. In July 2001, a team went to Ecuador, where one hundred and twenty five eye operations were performed. This included one hundred cataract operations, and twenty five operations on children with strabismus. In January 2002, a team went to Nicaragua, where one hundred eye operations were performed (cataracts, as well as strabismus surgery).

January 2002, a team went to Ghana, Africa, where approximately fifty eye op-

erations were performed. As I mentioned previously, two weeks ago a team went to the Dominican Republic, where approximately sixty eye operations were performed.

I have also forwarded to Janis Young & Teri May, videos on two Rotary sponsored eye surgery missions. One video "Mission of Mercy" by ABC 27 news, deals with a mission to the Dominican Republic. The second video, "Eyes of Guyana" by Fox channel 43, deals with a mission to Guyana.

Frank and Doyle, it has been a privilege for me to be involved with Avoidable Blindness Taskforce during this rotary year. This taskforce has addressed an area of need, that rotary has so much to offer.

With Warm Regards,

Albert A. Alley, M.D.
Area J Coordinator/ABTF

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



GHANA



Letter to the Editor, from 'The Anguillian'

I Can See - Thanks, Dr. Bardfield!

A momentous event has occurred to me this past year that I must share with the people responsible for it; The Anguilla Rotary Club.

I have worn eyeglasses since I was twelve years old. When contact lenses became available, I immediately sought them out and found a drastic change and improvement from the rims and frames of glasses. Incidentally, my sight was so poor, the lenses of the glasses looked like coke bottles; they were that thick and cumbersome.

You can't imagine my hopefulness when I learned of a new implanted, permanent lens being made available here in Anguilla. It was pretty difficult to visualize the freedom of no glasses, or lenses that would bring out even more importantly the realization of really seeing clearly for the first time in my life; it was a little overwhelming.

When Dr. Bardfield suggested me as a



potential candidate, I eagerly accepted. I found Dr. Gould and his associates to be most professional in their testings, findings, and operational procedures; and at the same time most congenial to their patient's

fears and apprehensions. My left and poorest eye was operated on at Princess Alexandria Hospital and the results were amazing-to me especially, but to the doctors as well.

The after care and the weekly visits to Dr. Bardfield were such a huge part of the overall program as Dr. Bardfield took meticulous care to see that the eye was healing properly with recommended eye drops and check ups. My vision continued to improve even greater as time passed.

Upon recent completion of the second eye operation, I want to share with you my success of 20/20 vision - the day following the operation. The joy and happiness I feel; words cannot express. I can see. I can see and I am so thankful to everyone involved. (continued)

"I want to share with you my success of 20/20 vision - the day following the operation. The joy and happiness I feel; words cannot express. I can see. I can see and I am so thankful to everyone involved."

The Rotary Club has to be responsible for the important contribution to humanity and Anguilla, and how fortunate for us that you care in providing these services. As people age, limited vision equates to limited activities. To have vision, means new life. You can read, watch TV, crochet, or just sit on the veranda and "people watch", and feel truly blessed to have sight re-

turned to you.

It is and continues to be a gift of life and love. You must be highly commended for allowing this exceptional opportunity to take place. My eternal thanks and my warmest wishes for continued success in the most rewarding endeavor.

Barbara Joyce

In Memorium

Dear Amigos:

It was a shock to learn of my good friend's PDG Tom McAllister's passing. I understand that Tom was in the Caribbean with wife Vita & constant supporting partner celebrating his birthday when he had a heart attack while swimming. Life is hard to understand at times. Tom was an outstanding volunteer working in his profession as a Dentist with Vita his wife as his assistant.

I will always remember how Tom helped take my Aunt Elvia to a meeting in Portland where I was the guest speaker & so many other occasions that we had to talk about the work of Rotary. Tom's fam-

ily can have the satisfaction of knowing he left this world a better place & his example to others will be long remembered. I join with all the Rotary Family the loss of an outstanding Humanitarian & Rotarian. Your Amigo,
Frank Devlyn



Assistant General Chairman Doyle Dannenberg joins Chairman Frank Devlyn in mourning the loss of dedicated Rotarian and ABTF Zone 23 Coordinator Dr. Tom McAllister.

Guerrero Project Update

Greetings from little Belgium. The application for a matching grant of 50,000 usd in total has arrived in Evanston in due time and found to be in good order We now await the decision of the trustees of the Rotary Foundation.

As I mentioned before, our club wants to start another action for the same Guerrero project. Indeed we would be interested in organizing a surgery camp with Belgian surgeons some time in May 2003.

[I am curious if] WCF would consider assisting us in that project or even delegate someone to share his experience in this type of field operation and take the direction of the camp. As a matter of fact, after paying for the matching grant we will still have some 30,000 usd dollar to help in the Guerrero project and it seems that the vol-

unteers could possibly be sponsored by the Rotary Foundations Rotary Volunteers funds.

We would need to know how many surgeons should be recruited here, how long such a camp can or should last, how many support people from Belgium could help on the spot, if the necessary materials and supplies are available over there, if not what amount of money would be needed for that purpose, where the camp should take place (Ometepec?), whether Dr. Ariel Ramirez should be involved in this immediately, etc...

Best regards,

Philippe M. Caron

Email: philippe@sepbelgium.org

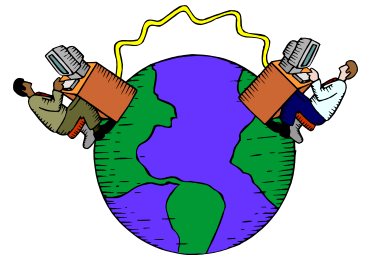
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Another Volunteer Registered on Task Force Website

- **Name:** Dr. Sanjiv Desai
- **District:** 3050
- **Club:** Rotary Club of Jodhpur West
- **Address:** Tarabai Eye Hospital, E-22, Shastri Nagar, Jodhpur 342003
- **Email:** sanjiv.desai@vsnl.com
- **Telephone:** +91-291-430714, 303265
- **Profession:** Ophthalmologist

Comments

I am a registered Rotary Volunteer. I have volunteered to perform eye surgery in Cambodia, several times in the past (Gift of Sight Mission of RID 3310, spearheaded by the RC of Singapore). I was the team leader of the mission in 2000. The best time for me to undertake volunteer surgery outside my country of residence is from May to July.



Update on Western Samoa Project

Invited by the Apia Rotary Club in the large oceanic Rotary District 9920, during April and May 2002, Rotarian Bo Hesselmark, an Optometrist of Sweden, has come to Samoa as Rotary Volunteer with his wife Helena.

They enjoyed checking the eyes, offering new reading glasses to who needs them most, and setting up a facility to craft glasses' lenses in Samoa: a first in Samoa's history which makes new eyeglasses affordable!

Through President Lealiifano Dr. Iopu Tanielu, President of the Apia Rotary Club, the Minister of Health of Samoa has gratefully received and accepted the donation from the Rotary Clubs in Europe.

The Hesselmarks have enjoyed improving the eyesight of these hospitable, friendly and peaceful people who live their culture in the rainforests of these botanical-garden-like islands of extreme beauty. The people who were helped by the Rotary Volunteers are very grateful to the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International for having made possible the most appreciated Rotary Volunteers Program.

This year Samoa celebrates its 40th anniversary of independence. It's a least developed country located between Hawaii and New Zealand, between California and Australia; where 2 hours' salary is less than 1US\$. In Rotary Service with best greetings and wishes,

Marco Kappenberger
International Service Director
Apia Rotary Club
District 9920, Samoa

The following update is from Bo and Helena Hesselmark regarding their ongoing project in Western Samoa. You can communicate with them via email at: helena.hesselmark@swipnet.se

The air freight came three weeks late. We have checked 120 people at the Flea-market and were first news on TV Samoa Saturday. Today we checked 60 police officers and all were given glasses. Some of them 3 pairs--reading, sun and driving glasses. Next workplace is a big hotel.

The new optical lab at the hospital will be the nicest office of all. The dispensing optician to be is a nice fellow.

The following article appeared in the *Samoan Observer* on March 23, 2002:

First ever Optic Lab underway

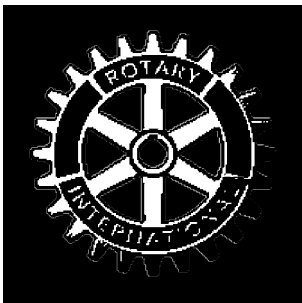
By Cherelle Jackson

An Optic lab will be established at the Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital to provide tests and glasses for people with visual problems. The Lab is in its beginning stages now, with a room already vacated for the purpose. Machines and equipment arrived in Samoa with two Rotary members last Tuesday. They are Rotary volunteers Bo Hesselmark, an optometrist or an eye specialist, and an optician or a spectacle technician, and his wife, Helena Hesselmark, a social geographer. They are helping in the establishment of the lab. Their arrival is the second part of the 'Rotary Avoidable Blindness Project'.

Facilities brought included a lenses grinding machine an automatic machine used to grind lenses to fit a frame, a hand grinding machine which is operated manually for the same purpose, a frame heater and several small tools used by optometrists and opticians. The machines and tools were donated by a Rotarian optometrist in Sweden and was fixed and shipped by other Rotary clubs in Sweden. The couples visit to Samoa is funded by Swedish Rotary Foundation with the New Opportunity Grant.

A Samoan employee at the hospital who has had experience in the optic field and is qualified as a dispensing optician will be trained by Mr. Hesselmark to work in the optic lab when completed. The couple says there is also an ophthalmologist

“Today we checked 60 police officers and all were given glasses. Some of them 3 pairs--reading, sun and driving glasses.”



www.rotarytaskforces.org/avoidable_blindness



Rtn. Bo Hesselmark at an eye clinic in the remote village of Masina

currently working at the hospital who will also be approached to work in the new lab.

"Samoa is lucky enough to have this opportunity," says Mrs. Hesselmark about the establishment of the optic lab. "There has been full cooperation between us and the Health



Rtn. Bo Hesselmark helping locals in the village of Fasitoo-Uta on the island of Upolu

Department, and it makes things so much easier," she said.

While they are here the couple will be visiting villages to do eye tests and to give away glasses to those who need it. They brought with them 1000 spectacles, which will be distributed free of charge. Mr. Hesselmark said they are

going to focus on people over 30 years in Samoa for tests. "When we grow up our eyes cannot reach the normal distance it used to when we were younger. For overseas colder climate people that usually starts at the age of 40," he said.

Asked for the reason 30 is the age for Samoa he said:

"The tropical climate, the heat and sun make people here grow old faster." Mrs. Hesselmark will be recording information about the people to be tested. "I want it very clearly calculated otherwise no one else can use what we have found."



Rtn. Bo Hesselmark at an eye clinic in the remote village of Masina

Thought for May - "Living Forever – The Good that Rotarians do Will Live On!"

- No man stands alone. Through all the centuries of recorded time, men have set into motion influences that affect your life today.
- You are the heir of the ages. Men reaching for the stars have created for you a world of wonder and challenge
- Living in you now are the ideals of the ragged soldiers of Valley Forge, the gallant pilgrims, the daring explorers and pioneers, the fighters for freedom through all history.
- On a more intimate note, your mother, father, teacher, clergyman, friend have built their influences into your character.
- More enduring than skyscrapers, bridges, cathedrals, and other material symbols of man's achievement are the invisible monuments of wisdom, inspiration and example erected in the hearts and minds of men.
- Example has immortal momentum. It has been truly said that a boy does not have to be shown a mark on the wall to measure up to, when there is a man around about the size he wants to be.
- Mentor Graham, teacher of Lincoln, is forgotten, but his influence lives forever in the Man of the Ages.
- Ideas move through time and space changing the world, making all things new, from the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel to the development of atomic power.
- Words are charged with everlasting power. The radiant words of the Sermon on the Mount light the spirits of each generation. The axioms of the great inspire men to "rise on steppingstones of their dead selves to higher things." Simple words expressing courage, faith and love have immortal significance in the lives of millions.
- Your example, your words, your ideas, your ideals can also be projected into the future to live forever in the lives of others.
- As you help men to grow, as you work for peace, understanding and good will, your influence will merge, with the good influences of men of every age, into the eternal stream of God's goodness.
- As you throw the weight of your influence on the side of good, the true and the beautiful, your life will achieve an endless splendor. It will go on in others, bigger, finer, nobler than you ever dared to be."

(Adapted from The Art of Living by Wilferd A. Peterson)

Rotarians, because "MANKIND IS OUR BUSINESS" we are to "SOW SEEDS OF LOVE" and we do that by the work we do on our Avoidable Blindness Task Force. As we care for the visual needs of our fellow man, we restore sight, hope, and dreams; we give new life and enable those we touch to realize their aspirations and enjoy God's creation - our world, their community, their family, and to share the wonder and miracle of life itself.

O. Doyle Dannenberg, O.D.

Asst. Gen. Chairman Avoidable Blindness Task Force 2001-2002