

AVOIDABLE BLINDNESS TASK FORCE AUGUST 2000

ONE WORLD SIGHT PROJECT FOCUSES ON BLINDNESS PREVENTION AND WORKS WITH ROTARY AND OTHERS

Close your eyes.

Keep them closed.

Just for a minute, think about the sounds you hear and motions you feel.

Now imagine not being able to see for the rest of your life.

Despite the efforts of governments and eyecare professionals, the world is becoming more blind each day. According to the World Health Organization, over 40 million people are blind in the world today; 90% of them live in developing countries. Over half of the blind people in the world are blind from cataract, a clouding of the lens that obstructs the passage of light.

And world blindness is going to get worse. Every five seconds, someone in the world goes blind. Every minute, a child goes blind. The World Health Organization estimates that by the year 2020, the number of blind people in the world will double unless something is done to stop this terrible trend. A leading resource for information and coordination in the fight against avoidable blindness is the One World Sight Project. Based in California, USA, One World Sight Project is working with the World Health Organization and other groups such as Rotary International's Avoidable Blindness Task Force to eliminate the causes of avoidable blindness and to provide surgeries for people already blind from cataract, so they might see again.

Dr. Richard Weiss, founder and President of OWSP, a new Rotarian, has sent a \$1,000 contribution to the ABTF. The contribution was added to the funds of a project to provide 1000 cataract surgeries in the Dominican Republic.

We strongly recommend you log on to the OWSP web site WWW.OWSP.ORG Their web site is a comprehensive resource for news and information on the causes of avoidable blindness. We are pleased that they have included Rotary's program on Avoidable Blindness on their web site. You will view Dr. Robert Welsh, ABTF Advisor congratulating Rotary International President Frank Devlyn on establishing the Rotary ABTF.

ROTARIAN ALAN HARKEY, PRESIDENT OF CBMI-USA AND ROTARIAN HAD IDEA THAT LED TO "VISION 2020"

Alan Harkey, seven year member of the Rotary Club of Greenville, South Carolina, had a simple thought back in 1994: "What would it take to eliminate preventable blind-

ness around the world by the year 2020?" Harkey's idea began to take shape over the next few years. By 1999, "Vision 2020—The Right to Sight" was launched as a global initiative supported by the World Health Organization., CBMI and 20 non-governmental eye care organizations.

To put the plan into action, CBMI and Vision 2020 members are focusing on creating permanent eye-care facilities in the poorest nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other developing countries.

Our ABTF is proud to recognize Rotarian Harkey for his dedication and commitment to help the needy blind around the globe. We urge Rotarians to support CBMI's efforts as they work in 109 countries on four continents to perform more than 300,000 cataract surgeries annually.

ROTARY CLUB #6 NEW YORK WORKS WITH PREVENT BLINDNESS NEW YORK & NYC CHILDREN'S VISION COALITION

Rosemary Clemens, Ph.D., President & CEO of Prevent Blindness New York, has been named Avoidable Blindness Task Force Chairman of the New York City Rotary Club #6—most appropriate for her organization like our ABTF is dedicated to saving sight.

One of Prevent Blindness New York's first activities, sponsored at its inception by the Rotary New York Foundation, was a poster contest among the city school children. The three winning posters have appeared as public service announcements on over 1000 New York City buses. Dr. Clemens reports that "given the public's response thus far, we have decided to extend this campaign throughout the year to bring avoidable blindness into mainstream thinking here in New York."

PBNY's Vision Check list includes:

1.1 million Americans are legally blind.

200,000 New Yorkers over 40 develop glaucoma annually.

700,000 New Yorkers have Diabetes. 40% of Diabetics develop Diabetic Retinopathy, which can cause blindness.

17% New Yorkers are seniors subject to cataracts and macular degeneration.

PRESIDENT FRANK DEVLYN ISSUES CERTIFICATE FOR CONTRIBUTION TO SAMOAN ROTARIAN

President Frank Devlyn recognized Samoan Rotarian Marco Kappenberger for his \$1700.00 contribution that he

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allowed Frank to apply to the ABTF and send to the RF.. President Frank wrote: "Thanks to your contribution 102 people in India will see because the RF is going to match your money for cataract operations. You will be one of the first to get a certificate showing how many blind people will have their sight back because of your donation.

"Next to life itself, God's most precious gift is sight—PROTECT IT, SAVE IT, and RESTORE IT."

Governor Paul Leavy, D. 7930, USA, Reaches Out to Aid Boy With R.O.P. From Malaysia D. 3300—CREATING AWARENESS and TAKING ACTION With Compassion & Love

On Aug. 5th, Ricky Ch'ng, President of the Rotary Club of Tanjung Bungah, District 3300, Malasia e-mailed an urgent request for help to prevent blindness of a 3 ½ month old boy, Jason Yeoh, Jason was born on April 13, and was 3 months premature. Ophthalmological assessment on June 13th revealed Jason had suffered from advanced ROP (Retinopathy of Prematurity) . His right eye was blind and his left eye, with only 30% sight left needed to undergo surgery in the US as soon as possible to save his left eye.

Jason was being referred to Schnepens Eye Research Center at Harvard University for special treatment, so the request for assistance in housing for Jason's parents was referred to ABTF Zone 31 Coordinator Ed Osterman, who in turn contacted Governor Paul Leavy of D. 7930. Jason had surgery on August 25th and the report is that at a followup visit on Tuesday, August 29th his recovery is progressing nicely. Ricky Ch'ng expresses his deep appreciation to all who have helped along the way.

Emergency Housing Network Established in D. 7930 In Response to Above Story

When Ed Osterman enlisted the aid of Governor Paul Leavy, D.7930 to assist in housing for the family of the boy, Governor Leavy not only went all out to help the family but proceeded to set up an Emergency Housing Network in his district to service future calls of this nature. In a letter to his presidents Paul wrote: "Because of our proximity to the world's best medical care we will continue to face these situations" and proceeded to set up a program to meet future requests for families in need. Past President Cliff Dochterman wrote: "Paul Leavy: In my book, your Rotary District 7930 has just become a "5 Star" District. What a great job you have done....and have

set up an Emergency Housing Network to handle future situations if they arise. Thanks for what you are doing!"

James Robinson named to staff liaison to avoidable blindness task force at rotary foundation

James Robinson has been promoted to the position of Supervision of New Programs and Initiatives in the Humanitarian Grants Programs Division and will be the staff liaison to our Avoidable Blindness Task Force. He will be responsible for Matching Grants applications submitted for Avoidable Blindness. This is a brand new assignment as of August 28th.

Jim states that he is in the process of developing the section's staff resources for this initiative and "I look forward to working with you and the Avoidable Blindness Task Force to Create Awareness and Take Action.". He can be reached by phone at 847/866-3039, by fax at 847/328-8554 or by e-mail at robinsoj@rotaryintl.org His new phone after 4 September will be 847/866-3349.

We congratulate Jim on his appointment and are excited about our increasing activity in Avoidable Blindness around our Rotary World.

ROTARY CLUB OF ROANOKE, VA. , DISTRICT 7570 SPONSORS PILOT PROJECT WITH AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

Thanks to our ABTF Member at Large, Kenneth D. Tuck, M.D., President of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the Rotary Club of Roanoke, VA., District 7570 is conducting a pilot program in cooperation with the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology-Host-An-Ophthalmologist program.

The program is designed to enable ophthalmologists from economically developing nations to come to the US for eyecare education. Two guests, Jaroslaw Marek, MD, PhD from Wroclaw, Poland, and Dunera R. Ilako, M.D. from Nairobi, Kenya have been invited. In addition, the Effingham, IL Rotary Club has agreed to sponsor an ophthalmologist and were selecting their guest from two possible candidates last week.

The international guests will arrive in the US on Oct. 12 and spend a week in the local community hosted by the hosting Rotary Club. They will travel to the American Academy Annual Meeting in Dallas on Oct. 20 and return home on October 26.

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