

**VOSH / INTERNATIONAL**

**VOLUNTEER OPTOMETRIC SERVICES TO HUMANITY**



## **How to Form a New VOSH Chapter**

### **Voluntary Optometric Services to Humanity**

By forming a new VOSH Chapter, you are leaving a legacy to the future...the future of VOSH missions, the future of willing volunteers, the future of vision care for thousands and the future of better lives through better vision. Dr. Franklin Harms took this same step when he formed the first VOSH Chapter in Kansas in 1972. You, too, can leave such a legacy in your state.

The following information is to provide a basic idea on the process of forming a VOSH Chapter. Are you ready to make your legacy come true?

#### **What is VOSH?**

VOSH is a group of volunteers who provide free or low cost vision care to people who either cannot afford it or do not have access to it. Generally we do a brief eye examination, checking for health and vision concerns of the eye. We then dispense used or re-cycled glasses to those in need of them. Participants of a VOSH trip usually finance their own travel costs. VOSH is non-political and non-sectarian.

#### **Who are VOSH members?**

Many "visionary" volunteers are optometrists but a significant number are laypersons, opticians, ophthalmologists, other medical professionals, and ophthalmic technicians. Some chapters even have more laypersons than professionals.

#### **Where and When is VOSH work done?**

Most missions take place in countries of the Western Hemisphere but, as the number of VOSH chapters grows, VOSH covers all areas of the world. There are occasionally domestic vision care programs developed for areas within the USA. Missions usually are 1 to 2 weeks in duration throughout the year.

## **What is a VOSH Chapter?**

A Chapter is the functional unit of the VOSH organization. It is formed for the purpose of enlisting volunteers and conducting missions. Chapters may be identified by state, regional or national boundaries. Members are not required to live within those boundaries. Officers and a small board usually provide administration.

# **Forming your New VOSH Chapter**

## **Sharing the “Vision”**

Tell everyone you can about VOSH—the opportunities and adventures that exist for them. Generally it is best to start with optometrists, ophthalmologists, optometric assistants and opticians. Civic club members (as Lions or Rotary members) and other lay persons can also make very valuable contributions. The best approach to “spread the word” might include:

1. One-on-one with colleagues. Your State or National Optometric Association leaders are usually very helpful and influential.
2. Set up a display booth at optometric or optical conventions/seminars or visit civic clubs. VOSH/International can supply brochures and displays for this purpose. A neighbouring State Chapter might be of assistance via speakers or informative printed material.
3. Mailings to optometrists and articles in optical publications can augment your efforts.
4. Inform those with whom you speak of the VOSH/International website at [www.VOSH.org](http://www.VOSH.org).

## **Develop a Core Group and Grow!**

Build your VOSH roster by gathering names, addresses, and dues from as many dedicated people as you can. Twenty to forty dollars per person per year is a typical fee for the state chapter. Payment of these dues shows their commitment. The state dues also will provide some start-up expenses.

Promote membership in the parent organization, VOSH/International. International dues are separate from Chapter dues but we hope all of your members will become members of VOSH/International. The International dues are sent to the International Sec./Treas. His name can be found on the website if you have not had contact with him initially. Presently the dues are \$100 for the chapter and a suggested \$10 per chapter member.

Ideally this money should be held until the official “organizational meeting” and then deposited into your VOSH account.

## **Talking with prospects**

Talk to individuals about what “involvement” means to them. To some it may mean a chance to use their own skills to help other people see more clearly with

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healthy eyes, to some it may mean a chance to interact with other cultures, to others it may mean a chance to get away to a tropical country for a winter break and to others it may mean a chance to help organize a VOSH chapter.

Provide each person with a “VOSH BROCHURE” and an application. Remind them that membership in your chapter does not mean they have to go on a mission but it does provide them an opportunity to help the cause.

## **The Organizational Meeting**

This is the official “birth” of a New Chapter and your “founding date”.

### **AGENDA**

--Adopt a Constitution and By-laws

(a sample is available from VOSH/International)

--Elect Officers

President—1 to 3 year term

3 Vice-Presidents—3 year terms

(Recommend initially staggering the 3 year terms each for continuity: 1 VP for 1 year term, 1 VP for 2 year term, 1 VP for 3 year term)

Secretary/Treasurer

(selected annually by the President and approved by the other officers)

NOTE: Larger chapters may want to expand the number of officers.

--Choose a bank and set up an account

--Approve getting EIN # (employee identification number)

This is a one page form #SS-\$ from IRS and is a basic need even though you don't have employees. VOSH/International can be of assistance.

--Approve Incorporation under a basic 501 (c) (3) non-profit status.

This is also a one-page form from IRS and VOSH/International.

Incorporation under IRS 501 (c)(4) can provide tax-exempt donations. This is complicated to accomplish but can be financially beneficial. Contact VOSH/International for guidance and an expedient, cost effective method of becoming incorporated.

--Plan your first VOSH Mission!!

--NOTE: Send the VOSH International Sec/Treasurer a copy of the paperwork completed at your first meeting. Include names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of your officers.

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## **VOSH RESOURCES**

VOSH/International wants you to get a good start and wants to assist your efforts by providing:

- A detailed packet on forming your own chapter with guidelines for the Constitution and By-laws.
- Guidance from the VOSH/International President and Officers
- Assignment of a liaison Vice President to assist you
- Access to information from other chapters through Newsletters, Annual Meetings, Directories, etc.

## **MEMBER BENEFITS**

Each of your members can benefit from International membership with the VOSH International newsletter, correspondence from International via e-mail or regular mail on issues of interest to all members, and attendance at the International meetings.

In addition they indirectly benefit from the ideas and information you gain as a chapter office.

Certainly the greatest benefit is the opportunity to “make a difference” in the visual welfare of others.

You give but little when you give of your possessions.  
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

Kahlil Gibran