

## **Changing lives.....**

**Volunteerism can change lives. VOSH-Ohio recently returned from an optometric mission into Honduras. This was their fourth visit, the first being 18 years ago. At that time we rode in the back of pickup trucks into the misty clouds to the outlying villages and the groups of underserved people waiting for us to offer free eye care. This time we rode in an outcast school bus from the States, from the misty clouds on the upper ridge above Tegucigalpa, onto the narrow, winding streets going into the city. We also served the people of the beautiful, small village of Cedros. Years ago we felt pleased to see 300 patients a day. On this mission we treated 3,474 patients and dispensed 2,035 pairs of glasses. How wonderful these experiences have been.**

**Team members for this mission were ages from 16 years to senior citizens, molding their personalities together and forming a well-oiled machine, working tirelessly to care for the many patients.**

**We were so fortunate to have a team member that helped our team with our failing autorefractor. In fact, he was the co-inventor of this instrument. Dr. Ben, Director of the Applied Vision Research and Ophthalmic Telemedicine with the New Jersey Medical School, originally from Canada, is now semi-retired and travels extensively doing research and mission work. In December 2011, he was in Saudi Arabia and in Somalia working with research on the early detection and management of Vision Threatening Diseases. When he first visited the Arabic Nations in the mid 80's – he saw mostly Bedouins, as well as children from Yemen.**

**This program was sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and included the introduction of his retinal camera (Ret-Cam) that provided a view of the retina equal to 120 degrees. Dr. Ben also brought a retinal camera for use on our mission into Honduras. One Vision Threatening Disease is Retinoblastoma. This is a rapidly developing cancer that develops in the cells of the retina. This can be either heritable or non-heritable and is rare, affecting 1 in 15,000 live births. If inherited there is a mutation on chromosome 13Q1-4. The Bedouins marry within their families and it was there where Dr. Ben was researching. Having such an expert with our team turned out to be rewarding for our team, as one of our patients in Cedros was diagnosed with a Vision Threatening Disease. Immediately Dr. Ben e-mailed the retina images around the world to confirm his diagnosis and to find the best hospital that could handle the case. He received responses from as far away as Japan, China, Australia, Germany, Saudi Arabia etc. for a total of over 15 countries agreeing with the diagnosis made. Dr. Ben speaks many languages and has contacts throughout the world. It turned out that Tegucigalpa had a Pediatric Oncologist who could help this child. Time will tell the outcome, but at present all is being done to save this 4 year olds life.**

**We were also blessed to be able to present a PET to a 14 year old girl who had been crippled from polio and was unable to walk. The PET is personal energy transportation, a type of wheel cart made for those unable to use their legs. This cart is made entirely by volunteers throughout the United States and provided free of cost to any group that can provide the funds for transportation to a receiving individual. VOSH-Ohio shipped the cart to Honduras prior to the team's arrival. The girl receiving this cart had been 6 years at school; however, was unable to continue to the new school for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She is now able to continue with her education. She and her mother were so happy to have this provided to her by the VOSH group. Immediately she could drive the cart and made her**

way through our eye clinic set up in Cedros. Another life changed. See....  
[www.petinternational.org](http://www.petinternational.org) for more information.

**VOSH offers many experiences to those members volunteering. Honduras has proved to be a definite example of the VOSH experience.**