

## HEALTHY EYES EYEGLOSS PROGRAM

### SHAREWOOD CLINIC

The clinic the **Student VOSH ONE** group has been working with for the local eye exam program is the Sharewood Clinic. It is a free healthcare clinic offering unscheduled care to the medically underserved populations of the greater Boston area. Located in the recreation area of the First Church of Malden, the clinic operates Tuesday nights from 6:30 to 9:00 PM. Sharewood is staffed by volunteer physicians, medical students, other health professions students, and translators. The clinic provides clinical, case management, and laboratory screening services. All services are free and open to everyone.

The Sharewood Project is managed primarily by first and second year students of Tufts University School of Medicine (TUSM) under the guidance of Dr. Joseph Gravel, and was founded by Dr. Brian Lisse and the TUSM class of 1999. The Sharewood Project derives its funding for operation costs solely through fundraising and donations.

Today, Sharewood has had approximately 2500 patient visits from 1500 different patients, most of whom do not possess health insurance. According to recent data, Sharewood's patient population has been estimated to be 60% Mandarin Chinese speaking, followed by Cantonese speaking patients as the next largest group. In addition, approximately 40% of the patients have been in the United States for less than one year. With the move to Malden, Sharewood is beginning to see an increase in patients from the Malden area as well, which include low-income and homeless individuals, many of which attend the Center United Methodist Church's "Bread of Life" soup kitchen that is also open on Tuesday nights.

For over four years, the student VOSH group has been providing vision screenings at the clinic once a month, under the supervision of Dr. Michael Ruby. There has been substantial demand to provide full comprehensive care to this underserved community. Since the mission of VOSH has always been to provide underserved communities with eye care, there was no better place for us to establish our first free student-run eye clinic than right in our own backyard. Every month, the VOSH clinicians see anywhere from 5-15 patients in the 2 ½ hours the Sharewood Clinic is open. That's over 100 patients per year that would otherwise be without care. On the off weeks that Student VOSH is not at Sharewood, there are many requests for eyecare services.

Therefore, we are hoping to expand our time at Sharewood so we can attend more than once a month. We know that the need for service exists, so we are aiming to get other licensed optometrists and optometry residents interested in volunteering to be preceptors for the VOSH students. This could potentially quadruple the number of exams we can give each year. Unfortunately, Dr. Ruby has left to pursue other opportunities and as such, we have been in the process of finding a replacement. We have had several volunteer optometrists willing to help on the scheduled first Tuesdays of the month, and we do not expect this transition to negatively impact future endeavors at Sharewood.

At this stage, the goal is to expand the free eye clinic department for Sharewood. We want to continue to provide diagnostic services, patient education, eyeglass and therapeutic prescriptions, and continuity of ophthalmic care. We do not aim to open an optical dispensary at Sharewood, although this could potentially be a future endeavor after the clinic is fully operational and

established. Recently we were able to make free glasses available to our patients we examine who demonstrate exceptional financial need. By coordinating with Kathy Majzoub at the Prevent Blindness America organization we are able to give vouchers to those patients who may otherwise be unable to purchase them. The program is called Healthy Eyes Eyeglass Program and is affiliated with the Luxottica Group. Once we give the patient the voucher and their new eyeglass prescription they are able to go to any local participating Luxottica retailers and receive a free pair of glasses. In terms of exam equipment, much has already been donated to our Sharewood Site, and we have expanded from a screening program to doing comprehensive examinations.

In conclusion, our activities at the Sharewood clinic involving free eye screenings are ongoing and we have future plans to expand our scope of care to comprehensive exams.