

March 1, 2010

Dear VOSH-Kansas Family,

As I write this letter, your plane is on final approach into Atlanta. I trust you had a comfortable flight and that the rest of your journey home is pleasant and uneventful.

I write this letter not as a Rotarian, but simply as me. Notice that I use the word "family." I am not using it lightly.

Back in 1994, I got a call from our then Rotary District Governor saying that his counterpart in Kansas had an optometric team willing to come to Central America and asking if we would be willing to host it. Without hesitation we said yes. And so it is that they asked me to contact a gentleman by the name of Don Kuehn to coordinate the details. You know the rest of the story...

By my count, this week we hosted the ninth version of VOSH in Panama, and I know my fellow Rotarians and I are looking forward to many more. But we will deal with that in due time. Now it is a time to rest and smile at the good work done and the good times shared.

The reason I am moved to write this letter is that, as I was driving home from the airport this morning, I realized how very much I enjoy your visits. Yes, it is all about helping our brothers and sisters in need, but for me it is much more than that. It is a chance to share time and build memories with you. Some of you have been coming for a long time and some of you were new this year. But my feelings of warmth and friendship extend to all of you.

Thank you so much for doing what you do. Although Panama is modern and prosperous, there is also much poverty and need. And what a difference a pair of glasses can make in the lives of those we serve. As a Panamanian, and as a Rotarian, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside you. As Franz, I treasure our friendship in ways that these words cannot fully express.

I hope to see you all again very soon. Until then, may God bless each and every one of you.

Franz Garcia de Paredes
Panama Rotario Oeste Club