

VOSH-OHIO Newsletter

www.voshohio.com

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Winter 2017

Special points of interest:

- VOSH-Ohio Missions
Haiti 2015
Romania 2015
Haiti 2016
El Salvador 2016
Dominican Republic 2016
Honduras 2017

VOSH-OHIO BOARD

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VOSH-Ohio Missions: Mexico 1987,
India I & II 1989, Guatemala 1991,
Nicaragua 1992, Ukraine 1993,
Honduras 1994, Ukraine 1995,
Honduras 1996, Pandora 1996,
Dominican Republic 1997,
El Salvador 1997, Dominican Republic 1998,
Haiti 1999, Ukraine 1999, Honduras 1999,
Dominican Republic 2000, Nicaragua 2000,
Venezuela 2001, Poland 2002,
Romania 2003, Honduras 2003,
Tanzania 2005, Ecuador 2006,
Guatemala 2007, Nicaragua 2008,
Dominican Republic 2008, Peru 2008,
Romania 2008, Mexico 2009,
Nicaragua 2009, Haiti 2010,
Dominican Republic 2010, Haiti 2011,
Peru 2011, Honduras 2012, Romania 2012,
Dominican Republic 2012, Nicaragua 2013,
Ukraine 2013, Panama 2014,
Dominican Republic 2014, Haiti 2015,
Romania 2015, Haiti 2016, El Salvador 2016,
Dominican Republic 2016, Honduras 2017

RETURN TO HAITI JANUARY 2015 5 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE EARTHQUAKE



As I start to write this account of the January mission to Haiti, I review my journal notes from the trip and realize how the people always seem to touch my heart. Their gracious mannerisms and kindness always stick with me. This trip was my third to the country. Some of us on this trip will always remember how our previous trip in 2010 went. It was surreal to be in the same location we were when the 2010 earthquake devastated Port-au-Prince. Thankfully this trip was much less eventful.

We began our week long trip in Hinche once again. We spend two days in the area seeing many patients with various conditions but all in great need. My most memorable case from Hinche was a young woman with a very obvious ocular tumor which was causing her quite a bit of pain. Through some connections with surgeons in country we were able to get the patient an appointment. I hope she was able to receive treatment

for the tumor. The anniversary of the earthquake was marked by us with accomplishing our mission with approximately 300 patients seen. That evening Father Glenn blessed us Ohio folks with a viewing of The Ohio State Buckeyes winning the national championship against the Oregon Ducks. What a great experience to watch our team win courtesy of a satellite TV, a generator and a thoughtful priest! We spent our second day in Hinche at the Mother Theresa's Sisters of Charity orphanage. We were able to check many children and people surrounding the convent. Once again we were able to see around 300 patients. On our third day, we leave Hinche and head to Port-au-Prince. We thank Father Glenn once again for his hospitality. He always makes us feel at home when we come. As we approach the city, we stop to examine the children of the Imagine Orphanage. The children are well cared for and happy people. Most of their

eyes are very healthy which is a testament to the wonderful care they are being given.

Our last stop on this mission trip takes us to Grace Children's Hospital in Port-au-Prince. We spent the next two days checking people of all ages from the city. We see about 500 people each day. The facility was nice and clean. Our support people from Grace were super helpful. We had lovely accommodations within the city, but we saw parts of the city which are unfit for human beings to be living within. As always we are reminded of the great need in the country of Haiti.

Our last day of the mission started with a visit to an orphanage. Teachers and children from His Home for Children Orphanage were our interpreters during the clinic days at Grace Hospital. The younger children are desperate for affection. It made me want to "sneak" a few kids home in my backpack. If only it was that easy. VOSH-Ohio had another successful Haiti mission trip. Our wonderful volunteers

were once again to be commended for their time and efforts on the trip.

Submitted by...Christina Fox, OD
Team Leader – Mark Pifer, OD

Note by the Editor – After our mission to Haiti, VOSH-Ohio was able to send funds to help the Eye Clinic at Grace Children's Hospital to assist with their purchase of much needed equipment for the clinic.



Dr. Tanner Udenberg

VOSH-OHIO MISSION TO SUCEAVA, ROMANIA

SEPTEMBER 2015

My wife and I had the opportunity to be part of a mission trip to Suceava, Romania in the fall of 2015. Our local hosts were Elena and Cornel Marza of Christian Aid Ministries, which is based in Berlin, Ohio. Elena and Cornel are ethnic Romanians who have very compelling stories to tell of their lives in communist Romania and their eventual escape to the West. After the fall of the communist regime they organized Christian Aid Ministries to bring food and other supplies from the United States to needy people in Romania. The glasses we distributed during the mission were sent to Romania six months earlier in one of their cargo containers from the warehouse in Berlin.

Before we went on our first mission to Romania I had wondered how it could be that a country in Europe could be so poor as to need aid from other countries to provide eyeglasses to its people. What we learned was that during the communist period, when Romania was run like a Russian colony, the

Russians told the Romanians what to make in their factories, and they told other Eastern Bloc countries what to buy from Romania. The Romanian factories had very little incentive to make good products because their markets were captive. After the end of the Soviet Union these captive markets no longer needed to buy Romanian goods, and they quit doing so. We were told that after six months virtually all of the factories in Romania had closed, and there was a massive exodus of Romanian people to Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, and other European countries in search of work. We were told that maybe 5 million people of a population of 20 million left the country.

Compounding the collapse of the economy was the breaking up of the collective farms and redistributing the land to the workers. This may sound like a wonderful idea, but in practice large productive farms were split up into plots of a few acres, which people with no capital or machinery, and in most cases very little ability to man-

age independently, attempted to farm. To this day horses are used more than tractors on Romanian farms and the level of farm technology used in Romania makes the Amish of Ohio look technologically advanced. It does make for a very charming look in the countryside, unfortunately the people are impoverished.

The Romanian economy is much improved today from the 90's. Romania is positioned to be very competitive in the IT business because its people are well educated and internet connections to the rest of Europe are good, but wages are much lower in Romania. A number of the people who helped us on the trip are IT people in their work worlds. The Romanian diaspora sends a great deal of money back to Romania. The European Union also sends aid to help build infrastructure. The problem is the people who were middle aged and older when the communist economy collapsed. Many of them have been unable to develop the skills needed to be useful in the new economy. Pensions are almost too low to keep body and soul together, as the government has very little revenue due to near total lack of industry and corruption in collecting taxes from the new economy. There is almost no government safety net. Unless the pensioners have someone working abroad to send them money they are in a very desperate financial situation. These pensioners made up at least 90% of our patients.



Our team consisted of 9 optometrists and 10 lay people, and was supported by a large number of students and other local translators. We had people on the team from Australia, the Netherlands, and three from Romania, traveling six hours by car to participate with the team. On our arrival in Cluj, in north central Romania, we were given a tour of Christian Aid Ministries warehouse. Donations from the US are collected and stored at the warehouse before being distributed through a network of churches throughout Romania. These were often the places we did our clinics. We had a warm up clinic on Sunday afternoon in the basement of a Baptist church outside of Cluj. The patients were virtually all pensioners like were mentioned above.

The next day we traveled by bus to Suceava, in the northeastern part of Romania. We traveled through the beautiful Carpathian Mountains, with lush pine forests growing on them. We moved our suitcases up to the fourth floor of the Philadelphia Christian School upon arrival,

and had our first supper of many at the school cafeteria. We divided our 19 members into two teams and traveled to small villages within 30 miles from Suceava. Therefore we were able to care for patients in 10 various villages for our 5 days of clinics. The extremely cooperative patients looked like the people you would expect to see in a Fiddler on the Roof production. As a mission goes on there are fewer glasses to try to match to the doctor's prescriptions each day. It was pretty slim pickings on our last day, and I would present each patient with several pairs to try to see which one helped them the most. In some locations people are very fussy about the appearance of the frames, less so about how well they can see with them. I remember one lady in particular in this village that was not going to take the first trial glasses off to try the second pair, because she thought she would not get anything if she said she didn't like the first ones. It took quite a bit of talking from the translators to get her to understand that we were trying to give her

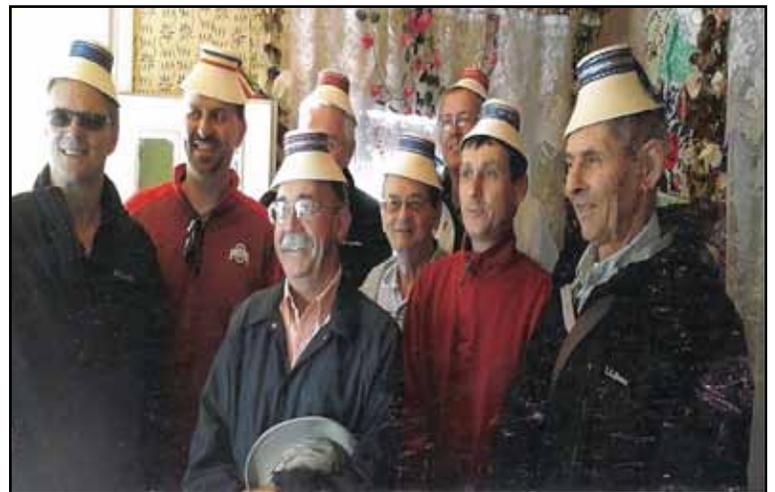
the best vision that we could, and that she was not going to leave empty handed. Moments like that make you realize how extremely blessed we are here in the US, and keep us going back on more VOSH Missions.

Submitted by...
Kenneth Oberholtzer
Romania Team Member
Team Leaders
Holly and Jim Conway, ODs

Note by the Editor – As part of this mission group, I was able to offer R&R to the team members that were able to stay in Romania for a few extra days. We visited the Medieval churches in Moldavia; viewed the famous Black Ceramic center; viewed a demonstration of Painting Easter Eggs; visited a Hat Maker; stopped at the Woodcutter's Home; stopped at a local Flea Market; traveled to the Maramures area, an area where ancient traditions still remain. This tour was coordinated by our Romanian friends, Ioana and Tony. What an interesting view into the culture that still remains in northeast Romania.



Dr.'s Marius & Michelle Vidikan



R & R at the Hat Maker

JOINING WITH MISSION POSSIBLE JANUARY 2016

In late 2015 plans were made to co-join with Mission Possible and send a small optometric team with the Mission Possible existing team to provide eye care for the many students cared for by this organization.

Mission Possible was started in 1979 and established in Findlay, Ohio. The mission began with a single school in Montrouis and now serves eight schools that support 2,200 students. Some of VOSH-Ohio members had previously volunteered at the Mission Possible compound and

was wishing to return after 20 years to facilitate eye care for the children. Plans were made. Dr. Tom Chambers, optometrist, indicated his desire to participate in this endeavor. Glasses and instruments were packed. Plans to depart with the Mission Possible team on January 20th were nearing. Illness stopped one member of the team; however, Dr. Tom continued on. Upon arriving at the Mission Possible compound he quickly trained lay people to assist him in this clinic.

Many students were seen and recommendations for follow up if needed were given. He also was able to provide exams on the staff of approximately 200 adults. He was a busy man and a true VOSHER. The Mission Possible team was appreciative of this involvement and hoping that VOSH will join again to serve the underserved children in Haiti.

Submitted by...
Pam Macke, RN
Mission Possible Coordinator



Dr. Tom Chambers

WORKING WITH FUEDEM IN EL SALVADOR 2016 MISSION

In January of 2016, VOSH-Ohio volunteers ventured to San Salvador to meet our hosts from Fudem. Fudem is an El Salvador organization started by wealthy women native to the country who wanted to improve the health of their fellow citizens. After witnessing a VOSH mission, they decided to put vision as their primary focus. Fudem provides eye care services along with optical

correction for little to no cost to the patients. The patients are able to order transitions and progressive lenses if they so desire for a nominal cost. After the team lands in San Salvador, we take a 3 hour ride to San Miguel which will serve as our home base for our week long mission.

Our first day of clinic was in Santa Rosa De Lima. We arrived at our location, and the Fudem

volunteers had the clinic set up and ready for us to get to work. We had a team of 7 US doctors and 4 El Salvador doctors. Along with the Fudem volunteers, we had 5 non-doctor volunteers on the trip. We were able to help 885 patients on the first day. We see very little pathology because the ophthalmologist hired by Fudem troubleshoot prior to our seeing the medical cases. The cataract referrals we had

were scheduled on site to have their cataracts removed in the San Miguel or San Salvador clinics.

The second day of clinic was spent in Ciudad Burriso. This community lies in the hills about an hour from San Miguel. The team was able to see 668 patients in this town. We finished early, and we were allowed to visit the city square and church. Even though we are seeing large numbers of patients, we do not feel mentally or physically exhausted. The doctors spent more time with each patient given as we had so many doctors. We were able to really refine their prescriptions given the Fudem organization was going to make the glasses to our specifications. It was nice to know the people with more difficult prescriptions were going to be able to receive proper correction. The number of translators also allowed for a smooth mission.

Day three of our trip was spent in the community of La Union. This location was closer to the ocean and humidity was definitely going to be a challenge. All of the VOSH and Fudem volunteers powered through,

and we were able to help 1,000 patients in one day. I saw a little 6 year-old boy who would not interact or look at me. After his examination, I put a trial frame on his face with his prescription. The smile on his face is something I cannot forget. The gift of sight can change a life.

Day four of our trip was spent in the town of Usulután. We were set up in an open air courtyard which made it a little difficult for the doctors to get good lighting for our examinations, but it allowed for a cooler waiting area for the patients. Our lovely lay volunteers entertained the waiting El Salvador citizens with their own rendition of the song "Happy". We are able to see over 800 patients again today. After an early finish, we take a 3 hour drive to our R&R location. The VOSH team spent a day at the beach to unwind and enjoy each other's company. We all



Dr. Christina Fox

would really like to return to work with Fudem in the future. The work they are doing in conjunction with VOSH teams is honorable and impressive. When we drive back to San Salvador, the Fudem employees gave us a going away dinner and a tour of their facilities. Their two building locations provide full service optometric and surgical care to the people of El Salvador. They have glaucoma, retinal and cataract surgeons available. They also have a pediatric clinic which provides muscle surgeries when needed.

Submitted by...
Christina Fox, OD
Team Leader



Dr. Larry Hookway



Brenda Kraus, Optician

2016 MISSION TRIP RETURN TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



February found our mission team once again traveling to the Dominican Republic, as VOSH sponsors every other year. It is always unique in the composition of the group as different individuals join us. Many shared that this year seemed especially unique in how the group bonded and connected to grow since we have returned, proving the unique nature of our unity.

This growing unity within the group spilled over into the lives of those we served in the D.R. Our hosts, the Klein's, shared with us their new mission home which was within walking distance to a southern beach of the island. The living quarters were so much nicer than Mucha Agua, complete with plenty of "hot" running water. "Hot" means somewhat warmed by the sun, but really

refreshingly eye opening in the hot climate. We enjoyed a small pool next to our living quarters that helped us cool down after a hot day serving at one of our mission destinations.

As always, we enjoyed visiting various locations and local churches in remote areas, very poor areas. The citizens of

those neighborhoods were very appreciative of the eye care they received, as was obvious from the smiles when glasses were placed on them for the first time, and they were surprised how well they could see! What a blessing to be a part of that giving! A very special day was in the middle of the week when we visited the prison. David Klein has been working in the prison for a good while building relationships with the prisoners and staff. So, when we arrived and aided them with their vision, as well as interacting with them on a personal level, the prisoners were given a taste of hope and love. It was a different experience going into a third world prison, guarded by armed guards who only spoke

Spanish, making it unnerving for us English speaking visitors. However, we were received well and treated with respect and appreciation. It was a highlight of our mission trip!

It is quite impossible to give a completely clear perspective of the effect made on the lives of the Dominicans, and to us as well in a brief article. Monday we visited Nigua, Tuesday we served Los Casabes, Wednesday found us at Najayo Men's Correctional Center, Thursday we were at a village called Hato Nuevo, and we finished Friday at Salamanca. The names of places are just that, only names. But, the names of the 150-200 people served daily may not be remembered, but are what really matters. The ten days away from home in February were days intended to serve and give, but all would agree that we who gave were blessed greatly. The Dominican people live very different lives than Americans, but their smiles and hearts reveal that we are all truly one people, made in His image, and desperately needing the Son.

Submitted by...

Tim James Nowlin

Dominican Republic Team Member
Team Leader, James Patterson, OD



CEDROS AND TEUPAZENTI HONDURAS

JANUARY 2017



It started on a cold Saturday morning with a 3:30 am wakeup call for a 4:00 am gathering at the Cleveland Airport for our mission to Honduras. When will these VOSH trips start at a decent hour? What's wrong with 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock for heaven's sake? Fourteen of us left for Atlanta on a 6:00 am flight to meet with six other members of the twenty person team. All flights were smooth and on time. After collecting our personal luggage and the VOSH bags, we were met by a smiling Bolivar Sanchez and our intrepid

driver, Marco Sierra. What a pleasure to see both of these men again. There were several of us that had met on a previous VOSH mission in 2012.

The two hour ride from Tegucigalpa to Cedros was bumpy, as were all the roads we traveled throughout the week. Enough said about the roads! Marco is a great driver despite the near rollover going to the hot springs and having to drive through a river due to a damaged bridge.

The accommodations in Cedros were a vast improvement over those of 2012. We were in newly renovated quarters with two sets of bunkbeds and two bathrooms in each room. Twenty people shared five rooms. The four married couples shared two rooms, eight men were in two rooms and the remaining four ladies were in the fifth room. The married couples and other women had hot water for showers, not the eight men. It was cold water every night except for Dr. Pifer. He snuck into the girl's room for a warm shower. (WIMP)!

In the first couple of days most of us, if not all, got a case of "the revenge". But with doses of Cipro, Imodium, and Pepto, we all recovered.

The clinic was set up on Sunday evening. Five rooms were used; registration, visual acuity, doctors exam, pickers (glasses selection), and adjustment and repair. Patient flow was smooth and efficient. In the three days in Cedros we saw a combined 1482 patients. There was an emphasis on education as to cataracts and pterygium. Over 2000 sunglasses were dispensed and many boxes of ocular lubricant. Nearly every patient complained of redness, irritation, tearing, headache, and other descriptions. We did our best to allay as many complaints as possible.

Thursday was a day of travel, shopping, and rest. On the way to Teupazenti we stopped at The Valley of the Angels. Many shops were perused and souvenirs purchased. Then, it was off to lunch for the Honduran native dish pupusas. A handmade white masa, stuffed with cheese, pork or a combination of both. They are then grilled to perfection. After lunch we enjoyed what Bolivar called the third best coffee in the world. It was excellent coffee.

Back on the bus, we bounced our way to Teupazenti (pronounced two-pa-cent-a). The mayor, pastor, and many volunteers were there to greet us.



Dr.'s Marc Berson & Bob Gerdes

Clinic was set up in the dark and had a similar flow as in Cedros, five rooms, patients going from one to the next. By day two we were out of sunglasses and very low on lubricants. We tried to prescribe the best possible correction for everyone. If that was not possible, special orders would be made in the U.S., sent to Bolivar and he would see that the individual would receive their special glasses. 1065 patients were care for in Teupazenti.

The Honduran people could not have been nicer. There were many think you's, God bless you and hugs. I know lives were changed and enhanced by our efforts. That's why we do this. The ride back to Tegucigalpa was relaxing knowing we would get a hot shower. Boy did that feel good. Bolivar and Karla hosted a banquet at La Scala restaurant in Teguc Saturday night. Pizza, ravioli, rigatoni was on the menu and we ate until we were over stuffed. To top it off they brought out a

birthday cake with one candle and sang Happy Birthday to you to Gary Barnard (that's me #79). What a way to end a great mission. Thank you all for such a memorable day.

The flight home put us in Atlanta on the night of the Super Bowl. Most fans were cheering for the Falcons. We had to board at the end of regulation so we did not know the outcome until landing in Cleveland. I was home in bed at 1:30 am. I'm ready to go back to Mexico in 2018.

Submitted by...
Gary Barnard, OD
Team Leader
Christina Fox, OD

Note by the Editor – 95 patients with cataracts were diagnosed for surgery. The Zoe Clinic is the largest clinic in Honduras doing cataract surgery and will be caring for these patients. The VOSH-Ohio Board, upon return to the states, voted to help assist with cost of these surgeries, again helping with vision care to the underserved.



Gary Uhl

PANDORA SORTING CENTER

The eyeglass sorting center located at the First Methodist Church in Pandora, Ohio continues to collect and recycle eyeglasses for third-world missions. In 2016, 200,894 pairs of glasses were received mostly from Lions Clubs and optometrists offices. These are brought to the sorting center and some are mailed. Also routine trips to vision centers are conducted to obtain large amounts of glasses received in these areas. Local volunteers provide all service to do the many tasks needed to run the sorting center in a smooth fashion. There are several women that volunteer

to help wash the glasses, other volunteers run a lensometer, and others that help load and unload boxes. Also the breakdown of glasses is provided by other volunteers. The sorting center currently encourages volunteers to serve and with groups that may want to learn how the process works and provide some work in doing the various tasks that are needed to run this operation. To be able to visit the sorting center you would need to contact Dorothy German, sorting center coordinator, between the hours of 9 am till noon Monday through Friday. Phone number

is 419-384-3700. She also will assist in setting up a group visit. When sending your glasses or bringing them to the sorting center, please consider using a box to transport these glasses, as large bags tend to have more glasses with scratches that are not useable. Thank you, we continue to serve the underserved. Submitted by Dorothy German, RN Sorting Center Coordinator

VOSH-Ohio
108 ½ East Washington
P.O. Box 414
Pandora, Ohio U.S.A. 45877-0414



RECOGNITIONS:

VOSH BOARD:

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Holly Conway,OD

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Brenda Kraus, Optician

John Moats,MD

Kenneth Oberholtzer

Nancy Oberholtzer

James Patterson,OD

Mark Pifer,OD

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EYE GLASS SORTING CENTER :

Coordinator... Dorothy German, RN

Volunteers @ the Center and those donating glasses – Optometrists – Lions Clubs – Other Individuals

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TEAMS:

Haiti 2015 – Gary Barnard, OD; Christina Fox, OD; Roy Ebihara, OD; Lindsay Florkay, OD; Ernie Hollenbacher; Brenda Kraus, Optician; Micah Kraus; Jeanette Lam, OD; Ron Meyers; Joanne Moats, RN; John Moats, MD; Mark Pifer, OD; Barbara Plaugh, RN; Tanner Udenberg, OD.

Romania 2015 – Andrei Constantin, OD; Holly Conway, OD; James Conway, OD; Tom Doyle, OD; Celeste Elizen; Lauren Jalkh, OD; John Moats, MD; Ken Oberholtzer; Nancy Oberholtzer; Barbara Plaugh, RN; Helena Raicu, OD; Dan Ritter; Janice Rumpff, Optician; Eleanor Runyan; Valentin Stefan; Marius Vidican, OD; Michelle Vidican, OD; Drusillia Weatherby, OD; Joseph Weatherby.

El Salvador 2016 – Gary Barnard, OD; Dawn Corozor; Christina Fox, OD; Greg Ferrell, OD; Jerry Ferrell, OD; Elaine Hale; Albert Hoffman, OD; Brenda Kraus, Optician; Larry Hookway, OD; Jamie Pifer; Mark Pifer, OD; Katrina Thomas, Optician.

Dominican Republic 2016 – Huey Bean; Roger Clay; Virginia Clay; Don Grubb, optician; Rick Miller, OD; Bob Noland; Tim Nowlin; Jim Patterson, OD; Pam Patterson; Matthew Patterson; Jason Powell; Lisa Snyder; Pete Snyder; Rose Taylor; Fred Thomas; Joyce Thomas, tech.

Honduras 2017 – Gary Barnard, OD; Marc Berson, OD; Tom Chambers, OD; Judy Clifft; Christina Fox, OD; Robert Gerdes, OD; Tina Gerdes; Angela Jackson, OD; Brenda Kraus, Optician; Tim Kraus; Ron Meyers; Joanne Moats, RN; John Moats, MD; Karen Norrick, OD; Ken Oberholtzer; Nancy Oberholtzer; Mark Pifer, OD; Barbara Talan; Chloe Taylor; Gary Uhl.

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UPCOMING MISSION:

Patzquaro, Mexico

Host – Cuidades Hermans Sister Cities de Patzcuaro

Dates – February 2018 (dates to be announced)

Contact – Brenda Kraus, Optician, to sign up for this mission bjk885@gmail.com



February 2017

2017 VOSH-OHIO DUES AND CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

When you become a member of VOSH-Ohio, you also become a member of VOSH-International.

Your dues and contributions help provide vision care to less fortunate people around the world.

Missions planned: visit the VOSH-Ohio website at www.voshohio.com

The Sorting Center's supply of recycled glasses is **EXTREMELY** low. If you have glasses to donate, PLEASE call the center at 1-419-384-3700 to arrange for pickup. We intend to purchase some items as **needed**, so all financial donations are greatly appreciated. Again, please call the Sorting Center.

Thank you for your support and remember that VOSH-Ohio is a 501(c)3 organization and your contribution may be tax deductible.

Thank You,
 Officers & Governors of VOSH-Ohio
 Christina Fox, OD Director

Life Member.....\$250.00
 Patron Member.....\$100.00
 Sustaining Member... \$50.00
 Regular Member..... \$35.00
 Donation.....\$

cut here -if you are a life member or have already paid 2017 dues---please disregard---Thank You

Name _____

Address _____

City,State,Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Return this information along with your dues and contribution to: Darlene Pohlman, Treasurer
 Make checks payable to **VOSH-Ohio**

11330 Bloomlock Rd.
 Delphos, OH 45833
pohlrent@gmail.com