2026 VOSH/International Humanitarian of the Year Award

Dr. Jennifer Meister Bourn

Dr. Jennifer Meister Bourn is the recipient of the 2026 VOSH/International Humanitarian of the Year Award, which recognises a VOSH chapter member whose remarkable leadership, innovation, public health practice, support for sustainable eye care, or work to improve understanding and correction of refractive error has made a lasting contribution.

Dr. Meister Bourn is an optometrist with Allina Health in Champlin, Minnesota, and a board member of VOSH-Minnesota. Her commitment to humanitarian eye care began in 1998 as an optometry student at Southern College of Optometry, where she served as president of the Student VOSH chapter and coordinated service trips to four countries. Nearly three decades later, that early commitment has grown into sustained leadership: she has participated in 11 eye-care missions across eight countries and helps lead VOSH-Minnesota's local eyeglass-sorting workshops, where donated glasses are prepared for teams serving communities around the world.



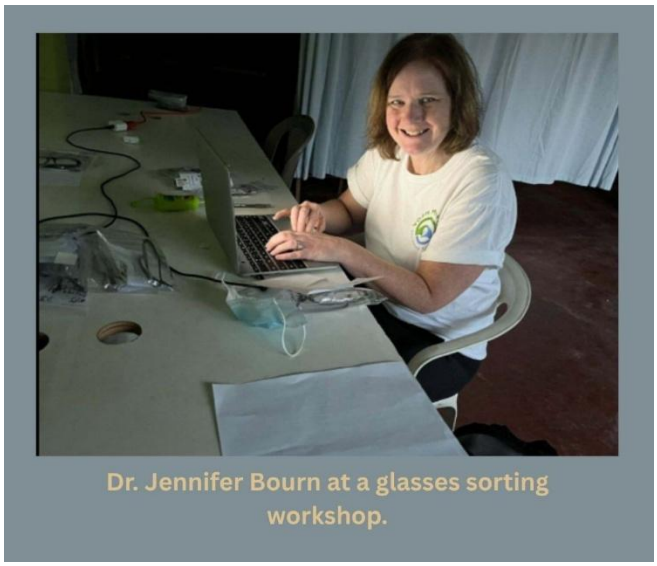
Dr. Jennifer Bourn and the dedicated VOSH-MN team in Guatemala.

A central focus of Dr. Meister Bourn's recent work has been developing a sustained partnership with the San Lucas Mission in Guatemala. Through three VOSH-Minnesota missions to San Lucas, she has helped build trust and a better understanding of the community's vision needs. Her next trip will be her fourth as team leader, and she is also mentoring another team preparing to serve there. She will later return with her family to provide vision screenings at the San Lucas Mission school, coordinating with a subsequent team so that students who need glasses or further evaluation can receive follow-up care. The goal is to connect the work of each team to establish a sustainable continuum of eye care for the San Lucas community.

For Dr. Meister Bourn, humanitarian service is about more than delivering eye care. It also means listening to the community, learning from local partners, and building relationships based on mutual respect. That same belief shapes her mentoring of first-time VOSH volunteers: she values helping them see how relationships formed through

service can broaden their perspective and inspire a lasting commitment to humanitarian service.

Dr. Georgiann Jensen Bohn, president of VOSH-MN, describes Dr Mesiter Bourn's contributions as instrumental to the chapter. *"Although she has a busy family and practice, Dr Bourn models volunteerism with her actions and selfless attitude. She is very organized and has an amazing "can do" attitude. Her dependability is unparalleled. When asked, Dr Bourn has always been willing to share her expertise and experience leading missions with new trip leaders. She is not only invaluable on the missions, but she brings strong leadership to VOSH-MN."*



Dr. Jennifer Bourn at a glasses sorting workshop.

Her practice philosophy is "*to provide compassionate care while protecting and enhancing your vision*." Her professional interests include caring for patients with diabetes, ocular pathology and contact lenses. She says "*I enjoy taking the time to get to know my patients so that I can provide quality care in a comfortable environment. I am often told that I am very thorough, a good listener and personable.*" Beyond her practice and humanitarian work, her personal interests include photography, swimming, traveling, and family activities. She is a mother of three daughters and is teaching them how to volunteer for VOSH.

We extend our sincere congratulations to Dr. Meister Bourn on this well-deserved award.

