From Classroom to Community: Dr. Frazier's Impactful Visit to Colombia

A professional visit to Colombia became both an international teaching opportunity and a chance to return to a volunteer partnership that has shaped decades of service in eye care.

When Marcela Frazier was in optometry school, she had the opportunity to join the SVOSH chapter at UAB (University of Alabama at Birmingham) on several humanitarian trips. Through these trips, she and her SVOSH mentors, including Drs. Kathy Weise, Patti Fuhr, Wendy Marsh-Tootle, Marsha Snow, and Mark Swanson, became lifelong friends and continued serving together in many humanitarian clinics. In July 2026, Marcela was invited, along with Dr. Katherine Weise, to speak at an international conference in her country of origin, Colombia. The two presented lectures on pediatric eye care, sports vision, and myopia alongside specialists from Mexico, Spain, Colombia, and the United States. Many eye doctors consider the annual event, **Franja 2026**, one of the top continuing education conferences for vision care in Latin America.



Image 1 Drs Frazier and Weise contributing to international education.

Before the conference Drs. Frazier and Weise visited the School of Optometry at Universidad de La Salle in Bogotá. They participated in a panel discussion with two other internationally recognized pediatric eye doctors and helped lead the **school's annual international vision research symposium**.

After the academic sessions and conference presentations, the visit took on a more personal meaning when Drs. Frazier and Weise returned to a place connected to Marcela's earlier VOSH work.



Image 2 Dr. Frazier with a girl patient in Colombia

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the trip for the longtime VOSHers, colleagues, and friends was their opportunity to volunteer at a children's home in Bogotá, **Children's Vision International**. Marcela was first introduced to the organization during a 2006 VOSH-Kentucky trip with Dr. Greg Hagedorn. The organization's founder established the home near the city dump in 1993 so that children who might otherwise have ended up on the streets could be raised there. Since then, the founder and her husband have raised nearly 350 children, several of whom have graduated from high school, including one who is about to become a cardiologist. Drs. Frazier and Weise helped perform eye exams and vision screenings. At lunchtime, they surprised the 180



Image 3 Dr Weise at work in Colombia

children currently living and learning at the home with ice cream. During the lunchtime prayer, one child prayed that Drs. Frazier and Weise would be as blessed as all of the children there felt. Children's Vision International now has an optometrist on staff and a fully outfitted optometry lane, while VOSH continues to provide new discontinued frames and lens blanks for the organization.

The trip reflected the lasting impact of VOSH connections: professional collaboration, international education, and direct service continuing to support children and communities years after the first visit.



Image 4 Ice cream is a universal joy!

Marcela Frazier, OD, MPH, FAAO

Associate Professor

Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

UAB Heersink School of Medicine