

AMIGOS News

Ecuador, Guatemala, Upcoming Trips, and more!



AMIGOS Members attended the PNW MHA Day of Service with Pacific Outreach, Prism Health and Casey Eye Institute!



Spring 2023

AMIGOS News shares with you all the hard work that Pacific students, doctors, and faculty have accomplished!

We have been keeping busy with many local volunteering events, international trips to Ecuador and Guatemala, as well as fundraising! We are now in the planning stages for the upcoming Summer 2023 trips, and we are looking forward to Winter 2023 as well!

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Contact Suze (ziad7659@pacificu.edu) or Jordan (garc6105@pacificu.edu) for more information.

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lago SCRUBS

Use code "amigos" for **10% off** and 5% of the proceeds goes to our organization!

We have also been providing continued support for the Homeless Vision Clinics in partnership with Vivid Eyecare!

Team Ecuador Spring 2023

In March 2023, a team of 8 optometry students, 3 doctors, and 1 optician traveled to Guadalupe, Ecuador to provide free eye exams and glasses. The timing of the trip was planned so that patients could also be referred for cataract surgery the following week at the same location by an ophthalmologist who was visiting. Over 3 clinic days 300 patients were seen, 50 cataract and 30 pterygium surgery referrals made, and 350 sunglasses and prescription glasses were dispensed.



Many patients had traveled hours to come see us and continually showed us how grateful they were with kind words and gifts like mangos or eggs. On the last day the local priest came to express how thankful he was for us, and that the community is looking forward to having us back in the future. Throughout our time in Guadalupe there were a handful of encounters we will never forget.

One was a young girl around the age of 4 who was accompanying her family to their eye exams. We asked if we could take a look at her eyes while they were waiting and ended up finding a large amount of astigmatism.

She was so excited getting fit for her glasses and continued saying “mas claro/more clear” over and over.



Another instance was a woman with down syndrome who had proptosis and wasn't seeing very well with either eye. We suspected she had amblyopia and a very large exo deviated strabismus of her right eye. When we performed a trial frame refraction, she became very happy when the perfect lens was finally found that helped her see out of her left eye. Her big smile and joyous change in demeanor with her new glasses said it all.

There was also a quiet young boy who could barely keep his eyes open and had nystagmus. Upon refraction we found out he had very high astigmatism so we would need to special order him glasses. In the meantime, we found him sunglasses to use as he looks forward to receiving his glasses. His mother was very grateful to us for spending the extra time to find him the perfect glasses.



(Ecuador continued)

Of the many patients we saw, the overarching theme was a sense of renewed joy when they received a pair of glasses. We saw patients ranging from newborn to 95 and it truly was a rewarding experience for each team member to see the impact we had on this community throughout their generations. We will never forget the beauty of Ecuador or the people who welcomed us into their community like family.



Donate to AMIGOS Eye Care at this PayPal QR Code!



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MORE ECUADOR SPRING BREAK 2023 PICTURES!



Tomas' Guatemala Experience

Before you go, you have all these ideas and preconceptions of what you will see in rural Guatemala. People with high prescriptions with no history of glasses use inducing severe amblyopia, massive pterygia the likes of which you won't see in a 20 year career in the United States, and cataracts that resemble a porcelain dinner plate more than a crystalline lens. And you're right. In a village in the deep heart of the jungle, I saw a lady with -16.00 in one eye and -17.00 in the other whose visual world did not exist before we trialed glasses. Within 4 hours at the Parroquia, I saw pterygia that were more encompassing and sinister than any I had seen working under a corneal ophthalmologist for 3 years. I lost count of the amount of times I met a kind but frail elderly person who needed guidance from family to simply return a gaze in my direction, only to be greeted in both eyes with the newly discovered stage 5+ cataracts. All these people and more exist down there, with all the debilitations these conditions induce. And all these people are exceedingly kind, excited, and gracious for the help you provide. You can guess as to how much you will be showered in words and gestures of thankful appreciation. You will woefully underestimate it.

What I did not expect however came in the form of a girl in her early 20s on the last day at the clinic. Already, I was wondering what brought her in because she was outside the usual patient age range of middle age to early elderly. Our automated screener found she had essentially no need for a glasses prescription, only raising my suspicion. She did however

have something that few patients did have, a phone with a translated reason why she was there already typed in: trouble seeing clear with headaches when she read up close. After taking a little longer to go back and forth translating through the app, I found out she was a local nursing student who was struggling studying for tests because of her eyes. I was shocked. I had just finished spending two months studying for Boards not a week prior, so I knew all too well how much of a toll it takes on the eyes. I couldn't help but see some of myself in her when hearing the very same problems that had afflicted me be echoed through her mouth. I told her I knew exactly what was happening to her, and I knew exactly how to fix it. She immediately lit up with such an ecstatic, thankful happiness hearing that someone understood her and her struggle, and that it was nearing an end. Such emotion gave hint at the degree of beneficial impact we would have on her life, all despite the exceedingly few words spoken between us.

What really stuck with me amidst the numerous examples of positive help we as a group provided was just how normal of an exam it was. Yes, you find yourself greeted with situations you simply will not see back home, and you are able to help improve those lives for the better. Drastically, in many cases. Yet, you overlook and don't expect to find a fellow student whose education you can make easier with a simple add. When surrounded by the abnormal, the normal becomes the unexpected.

Hifza's Guatemala Experience

My experience traveling to Guatemala and providing eye exams was unforgettable, to say the least. Seeing hundreds of new faces light up because they were finally able to read their Bible or because they got cool new sunglasses is something I will cherish forever. But among those hundreds of faces, there is one special one I will never forget. It was our second clinic day, and we drove another 2 hours from Playa Grande to provide eye exams to children at a local public school. I was inside doing DO for the second half of the day, and part of that role was sending the patients we had just seen outside to the optical. It was while making these rounds back and forth from the classroom to our makeshift optical in the undercover area that I met a young boy. He was sitting on a chair next to the optical, barefoot and hunched over. I, in the rush of trying to get as many patients seen as possible, would accidentally step on his foot. The first time it happened, I immediately apologized, and that's when he looked up and smiled at me with his toothless grin. I asked him for his name, and it was then that I realized he was unable to speak. Throughout the remainder of the day, I kept accidentally stepping on his foot, but he would always smile and make a gesture with his hand, signifying he was alright.



It was towards the end of the day that he left his seat and made his way into the classroom. We had started packing up, but when I saw him, I knew I had to take a selfie with him because there was something so special about him. As soon as I pulled my phone out, his eyes lit up, and he put his arm over my shoulder and started posing. After I was done taking the selfies, he motioned towards my phone and started taking selfies himself! To my surprise, he was very well-versed with the iPhone and knew exactly where the camera app was and how to use it. He was quickly shooed away by a local community member, an occurrence that he seemed almost too familiar with.



As we made our way back to the bus, there he was again, at the doorstep of our bus, ready to say goodbye to all of us. He started making his rounds, shaking everyone's hand, but when it came to my turn, he took my hand and pulled me in to embrace me with the biggest bear hug I've ever received. I was honestly in a state of shock, but from what my peers tell me, the way he hugged me was as if I were a long-lost friend or someone that meant a lot to him.

(Hifza's Guatemala Experience continued)

Truthfully, I don't even think we gave him an eye exam, as we learned afterwards that he didn't even attend the school due to his inability to speak and the school's lack of resources for special needs kids. But I guess to him being acknowledged and spoken to is what made me so special because, just like him sitting in the corner of the optical or being shooed away by an adult, it seemed like he is used to just being on the sidelines.



I wish there was more we could do for that little boy, but it gives me comfort knowing that just by having a few conversations with him, I was able to give him so much happiness, even if it was just for a few moments. And although I learned so much in terms of optometry during this trip, I think the most valuable thing I learned is that kindness, even as little as smiling at someone, can truly change the world.

MORE GUATEMALA SPRING BREAK 2023 PICTURES!



Our Annual “Wine Survivor” Fundraiser Results

1st place: On Cloud Wine (Byron, Ethan, Tyler, Ben)

2nd place: No Whining (Alexa, Tim, Allen)

3rd place: Partners in Wine (Claire, Chandler, Kaylyn, Kallista)

Our winning teams consisted of all first years! Welcome to the program! We had 16 teams enter, with one being the Forest Grove Facility Team. We raised \$640 that was split between the international trips of Ecuador and Guatemala this spring break. Over 50 bottles of wine were given out!

Eyeball 2023 is coming up!

Mid-late September. Updates to come! (follow our social media to stay updated)

Upcoming Trips:

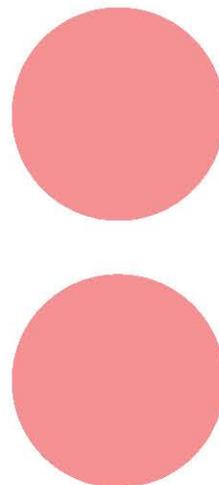
Summer—Guatemala,
Winter—to be determined!

Interested in making a donation to the program?

We accept prescription glasses, drops, and monetary donations. Contact amigos@contact.pacificu.edu for donation coordination help.

Our Address:

AMIGOS EyeCare - Pacific University
2043 College Way
Forest Grove, OR, 97116



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