

## Twenty-four years of service in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua

VOSH-Connecticut held its annual eye care clinic in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua on January 10-18, 2025. This was the 24th year of service to the San Juan del Sur area and the 21st organized by VOSH-Connecticut, along with three previous ones organized by SVOSH-NECO.



*Image 1 Patients waiting to be seen. Credit: Fundacion Patricia Claeys@25*



*Image 2 Nicaraguan Optometrist Amanda Vado with OD Lawrence Nierman*

The local team of approximately 80 volunteers supported this clinic as translators and helpers under the supervision of Dra. Rosa Elena Bello. Dr Bello has been the key local partner of this clinic for the past 24 years.

This year's team consisted of 15 US Optometrists and 3 optometry students from Berkeley, as well as 5 Nicaraguan optometry students and 1 Nicaraguan optometrist from UNAN (National Autonomous University of Nicaragua) organized in seven optometry teams and supported by a dispensing unit manned by 4 opticians and 2 assistants. Dr Bello and other Nicaraguan healthcare professionals set up a medical area alongside the optometry clinics. Several lay volunteers helped with taking the blood pressure of patients, eye exam records management, and the important daily patient bus transportation to the Fundación Patricia Claeys adult education school facility; 10 km outside of San Juan del Sur.



Image 3 and 4 OD teams at work. Credit: Fundacion Patricia Cleys@25

The SVOSH-UNAN team received a mentorship grant to participate in this clinic. The experience of working alongside experienced ODs was invaluable for the Nicaraguan students who were able to demonstrate their clinical skills and learn working alongside the visiting ODs. The clinic coordinator, Jane Mirandette, took extraordinary care of the Nicaraguan students, who felt very touched by her kindness.

VOSH-CT received many generous donations of lenses and frames and at least 15 OD practices in CT and Maine helped with the edging to make approximately 1800 brand new pairs of glasses including single vision and bifocals. What a difference these made for quality and moving the line of patients faster. Donors include Cherry Optical Lab, VSP's Eyes of Hope Donation

Program, and Eye Care of Maine. The clinic supplemented its stock by purchasing glasses, sunglasses, and readers from the Virginia Lions Club.

Over the four-day clinic period, they saw 3,937 patients, increasing the total patient service to almost 60,000 patients over the past 20 years.



*Image 4 At the end of the clinic, all volunteers received a certificate of appreciation. Credit Fundacion Patricia Claeys*

*This article is based on the VOSH-CT report of the clinic and images of the Fundacion Patricia Claeys.*