VOSH-Arizona attends to migrants' eye health needs in Tucson

It has been several years since VOSH-Arizona started partnering with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to provide vision and eye care to immigrants in Tucson. The IRC helps refugees, asylees, victims of human trafficking, survivors of torture, and other immigrants to rebuild their lives. The IRC works in more than 40 countries and 29 US cities, including Tucson. The IRC in Tucson ensures children are enrolled in schools, parents can find employment, and families receive health care, all to rebuild their lives.

While the VOSH-Arizona team completes a thorough eye evaluation and screens for ophthalmic disease, they concentrate on providing either over-the-counter or prescription spectacles at no charge because the government-provided health insurance in Arizona does not cover adults for this.



The clinic was held at the IRC's premises on Saturday, January 24, 2026. It was organized by Dr. J. Daniel Twelker from VOSH-Arizona and Linda Kraemer from the IRC. IRC sent an invitation, and 60 people signed up for an eye exam in groups of 10 to 20 each hour. The clinic ended at about 12:30pm and everything was packed up by about 1pm.

There was a registration station with 2 volunteers. There were 2 history/visual acuity stations with 3 volunteers (one at each station and one float - 2 University of Arizona medical students and 1 certified ophthalmic technician). There were two refraction stations with 3 volunteers (3 University of Arizona ophthalmology residents, one at each station and one float). Dr. Michael Kozlowski from Midwestern University College of Optometry headed up the ocular health station with 3 Midwestern optometry student volunteers. Pat Broyles volunteered at the dispensing station. Linda Kraemer supervised the registration station and language translators (Kinyarwandi, Arabic, and Spanish) and Dr. Twelker supervised the clinical operations.

Fifty (83%) of registered patients showed up. The average age was 39.7 years (STD 19 years). The youngest was 5 years old and the oldest was 75 years old.

Of the 50, 26% spoke English, 33% Spanish, 12% Arabic, 8% Swahili, 6% Dari, 4% Somali, and 4% Farsi. Several volunteers were bilingual in English/Spanish.

Seven (14%) did not need spectacles, 20 (40%) needed over-the-counter readers, and 23 (46%) needed prescription spectacles.

The clinic was free of charge. The Rx spectacles are being made and will be dropped off at the IRC in about 10 days.

Of the 46% that needed Rx spectacles, 8% were for hyperopia, 30% myopia, 22% astigmatism, and 40% for presbyopia (with hyperopia and/or astigmatism).



Ten percent had dry eyes and we recommended OTC artificial tears (Refresh Tears). Four percent had allergic conjunctivitis, and we recommended OTC topical antihistamine (Zaditor).

There were 2 referrals to ophthalmology clinics, one for visually significant cataracts and the other for suspected optic neuritis (optic nerve pallor). The intraocular pressure in each eye was checked with iCare and dilated with 0.5% tropicamide each eye (no topical anaesthetic). Everyone received sunglasses. Four patients declined dilation.

US VOSH and SVOSH chapters also serve their local communities. We value and encourage this work.

For more information on the IRC in Tucson: https://www.rescue.org/united-states/tucson-az

For more information on this VOSH-AZ clinic, you can contact Dr Twelker, at twelker@vosh.org