

## Dominican Republic Trip Serves Over 400

March of 2002 marked the 4th successful trip to San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic. A team of 26 Vision Health International volunteer ophthalmologists, anesthesiologists, nurses, surgical techs and other personnel traveled first to the capital city of Santo Domingo, and then boarded a bus for the four-hour ride to San Juan de la Maguana.

The success of the trip was made possible by VHI's partnership with the Mission Office of the Diocese of Orlando, the local diocese of San Juan, hospital staff, and the community. All joined with the VHI team to serve 422 adults and children with a complete eye exam, distribute over 500 pairs of eyeglasses, and perform 142 surgeries.



Neighborhood children in San Juan de la Maguana. Photo by Dotsie Nat.

## Partnerships Key to Collaboration with Host Countries

Until the mid-1990s Vision Health International operated as an independent organization at the invitation of the host country government. Arrangements were made directly between VHI and the host government for the official invitation, reciprocal licensure of our medical professionals, shipping of supplies, and logistical support in the work area. In 1995, VHI made its first trip to Poland in collaboration with Ampolmed, a medical supply company that provides medical equipment to Eastern Europe. That collaboration proved to be very successful and facilitated our entry into a new country.

*International Medical*



*Equipment & Supplies*

VHI made its first trip to the Dominican Republic in 1998 in collaboration with the Mission Office of the Diocese of Orlando, Florida. The Mission Office is involved in year-round community development assistance in the Dominican Republic, and had identified a great need for eye care in the region. VHI partnered with the Mission Office who negotiated with the Ministry of Health on our behalf and arranged for an official invitation to the DR. The Mission Office made all of the local arrangements and provided assistance in shipping supplies. VHI has made four trips to the DR since 1998.

**"One of the goals of the Mission Office is to provide the people of our Sister Diocese in the Dominican Republic with integral health care services. As a diocese we recognize that alone we are unable to do this. Networking with other organizations is a valuable and responsible approach to providing integral health care to people in developing countries."**  
Sister Bernadette Mackay, Diocese of Orlando Mission Office Director.



In 2001, VHI made its first trip to Honduras at the invitation of Save the Children Honduras. This partnership represented the first time that VHI partnered with a host-country non-governmental organization (NGO). This collaboration also proved very effective and provided excellent logistical support in-country. VHI has been invited to return to Honduras in October 2002 under the sponsorship of Save the Children.



**Save the Children**

Honduras

"Women and children (in Honduras) do not have access to basic or quality health services ... such as Ophthalmology. For this reason ... VHI's work is very important." Mariano Planells, Executive Director of Save the Children Honduras.

Partnerships with local and non-governmental organizations are an important part of our work with host countries will be key to the continued success of Vision Health International. Please contact us if you know of any organizations that may be interested in sponsoring a Vision Health International program.

## UPCOMING Programs



### Honduras

Vision Health International will return to La Esperanza, Intibuca in Honduras the week of October 26 – November 2, 2002. A team of volunteer ophthalmologists, anesthesiologists, nurses and other personnel will travel to this remote western province of Honduras where they will set up a clinic, eyeglass distribution program, and provide sight-restoring surgery. We hope to be able to screen patients for surgery from a wide area throughout Honduras. Save the Children Honduras will once again provide an excellent team of in-country staff and volunteers. We look forward to our return.



### Nicaragua

March 2003 has been set for our 6th trip to Nicaragua. The local health department in Chinandega has requested a VHI surgical and eyeglass distribution program. A new, modern hospital, with 2 surgical suites and an outpatient clinic will be made available to carryout the program. The Nicaraguan Social Security Administration will be the official sponsoring agency, as they have since VHI's first successful trip to Jinotega in 1996. Tentative program dates are February 28 – March 9, 2003.

## Equipment Donations



Rick and Kay Whitten (far right) receive donation from the North Fresno Lions Club in Fresno, CA.

*Vision Health has received donations from service clubs restricted for the purchase of greatly needed equipment. Some of the most recent contributions have included:*

- A portable field microscope purchased with a donation from the East Fresno Rotary Club
- A portable slit lamp purchased with funds donated from the North Fresno Lions Club.

*Both of these donations were made possible through Dr. and Mrs. Richard Whitten. Rick Whitten is an ophthalmologist and Vice President of the VHI Board of Directors and Kay Whitten is the Director of Nursing for VHI and board member. Both are founding members of Vision Health International and reside in Fresno, California.*

*Thank you Rick and Kay!*

Come visit us on the internet at [www.visionhealth.org](http://www.visionhealth.org)

### For More Information

If you are an ophthalmologist, anesthesiologist, surgical nurse or technician, or a recovery room nurse and think you would like to volunteer for a VHI mission, please contact **Cindy Goodale at (707) 224-5956** or **toll-free at (877) 689-2981.**

If you know someone who would like to receive our newsletter or get more information about VHI, please let us know.

We'd like to spread the word.

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1915 MAIN STREET • NAPA, CA 94559 • USA