

## Humanitarian mission in Ecuador | Mission humanitaire en Équateur



The line of patients that were waiting for us each morning in Cuenca / La lignée de patients qui nous attendaient à chaque matin à Cuenca.

**BY/ PAR VALÉRIE SAVOIE,**  
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À L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

In May 2012, I was one of 14 students from the University of Montreal School of Optometry who volunteered to participate as part of a humanitarian mission in Ecuador with the organization VOSH/International: Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity. Our team also included 10 students from the University of Waterloo, six optometrists, two opticians and eight volunteers.

Every summer, students who have completed their second year of optometry, have the opportunity to volunteer for a mission to help in developing countries, enhance their knowledge of optometry and live a unique experience. During the mission, they are assigned to triage, exams or the dispensary. On average, we examined 400 patients per day and several of these patients were fitted with glasses. We saw many types of eye conditions, such as big cylinders, diabetic retinopathy,



My Tien PHAM, 3rd year Montreal student, is performing a retinoscopy with a lens bar / My Tien PHAM, étudiante en 3<sup>e</sup> année à Montréal, effectue une rétinoscopie avec une barre de lentilles.

advanced cataracts, pterygiums and even cranial nerve palsies, Marcus Gunn pupils and nystagmuses!

The mission was also a great opportunity for us to practice our Spanish, although there were always translators available at the clinic for those who needed them. We examined patients of all

ages, from infants to elders, thus performing exams on a very diverse population. The patients were very appreciative of our services and we received big "muchas gracias" and even hugs and kisses! We also brought souvenirs from Canada, such as pencils and stickers, that made the little ones very happy.

We had a few days of clinic in the city of Guayaquil, followed by a few more days in the city of Cuenca. The humanitarian part of our trip lasted two weeks and the group stayed an extra week to tour the capital, Quito. During our stay in Quito, we went to the "Mitad del Mundo" (Middle of the World) to visit the equator and take a picture with one foot in each hemisphere!

In August 2012, another group of students from Montreal and Waterloo travelled to Peru for another humanitarian mission with VOSH.

VOSH is always looking for optometrists who want to share their knowledge with students and are committed to helping communities in developing countries. If you are interested in participating in a humanitarian mission like this one, you can contact Pierre Labine at [pierre.labine@sympatico.ca](mailto:pierre.labine@sympatico.ca) or visit the web site [www.vosh.org](http://www.vosh.org).

During the month of May 2012, I was one of fourteen students and students from the University of Montréal's optometry school who volunteered for a humanitarian mission in Ecuador with the organization VOSH/International: Volunteer Optometric Services to

Humanity. Our group of volunteers included ten students from the University of Waterloo, six optometrists, two opticians and eight volunteers.

At each stop, the students who were completing their second year of optometry had the opportunity to participate in a mission to help a country in development, deepen their knowledge of optometry and live a unique experience. On the mission, they were assigned to triage, exams or the dispensary of glasses. On average, the team examined 400 patients per day and several of them adjusted their glasses. In addition, we saw various eye conditions, such as large cylinders, diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, ptosis and even palsies of cranial nerves, Marcus Gunn and nystagmus!

The mission was also a great opportunity to practice our Spanish, although there were translators available at the clinic for those who needed them. We saw patients of all ages, from newborns to seniors, so we were able to examine a very diverse population. Patients were very grateful for the services provided.

Our services and we received big "muchas gracias" and even kisses! We also brought souvenirs from Canada, such as crayons and socks, which made the children very happy.

We have been in Guayaquil for a few days and then in Cuenca. The humanitarian part of the trip lasted two weeks and we stayed an extra week to tour the capital, Quito. During our stay in Quito, we went to the "Mitad del Mundo" (Middle of the World) to visit the equator and take a picture with one foot in each hemisphere!

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The Canadian Association of Optometry Students (CAOS) at the Rosenberg School of Optometry (RSO), gathered together to celebrate a delicious Thanksgiving dinner in October, and discussed the goals of COAS-RSO Chapter. They passed out student membership forms for CAO and discussed current events in Canadian Optometry, including the proposed expansion to the scope of practice in Alberta as many of these Canadian students are from Calgary or Edmonton. They send their greetings!