

The Gift of Sight for Niquinohomo

By Dr. Neil Lucchese, MD

The number-one cause of poor vision throughout the world is not cataracts, injury or infection. It is lack of eyeglasses. On November 6, 2004, the latest Sharing Resources Worldwide mission returned from Niquinohomo, Nicaragua. During the week-long visit, our team of eleven volunteers—three ophthalmologists, three ophthalmic technicians, an optician, a nurse and three support staff—saw nearly 600 patients and dispensed more than 531 pairs of glasses.

Niquinohomo is a small town, about an hour's drive south of Nicaragua's capital, Managua. The population of Niquinohomo itself is about 16,000. But the surrounding cities of Catarina and San Juan del Oriente, plus rural areas, bring the total local population to about 25,000. The days get hot—up to the high 90's in November. But nights are *fresco* (cool) at about 75 degrees. In the center of town is a large plaza and the Church of Santa Ana, built in 1663. On the cobblestone streets you see more bicycles and horses than cars. Everywhere you go you're greeted with "Buenos días," "Buenas tardes," or "Buenas noches." The people are warm and a bit shy around North Americans. While we were there, the mayoral race was heating up; and every afternoon there was a parade of people, horses



A mother brings her three daughters to SRW eye clinic for treatment of a genetic eye problem from which all three suffer. Dr. David Gamm was able to examine each of the young ladies, and prescription glasses will be sent to Nicaragua for them.

and pickup trucks with loudspeakers in anticipation of the election. Between the exploding firecrackers, we could hear the promises of each of the four major parties—no campaign ads on TV, but lots of live action right on the streets.

Bonnie Heberer and Maggie Laurent, ophthalmic technicians from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, began planning this trip in February 2004. They were inspired to initiate this mission because they knew that many teachers in Niquinohomo and nearby com-

munities needed reading glasses but couldn't afford either the exams or the glasses. Many of these teachers volunteered to help with vision screening, registration, and "crowd control." Lorena Kannel, a native of Niquinohomo now living in Milwaukee, contacted the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health and local doctors to discuss the mission. Once the proposal was accepted, Lorena began making arrangements for our group. The entire team would live in her Niquinohomo home, across from the Church of Santa Ana. Our clinic would be the local library, with our eyeglass dispensary set up in the breezy covered patio. Bonnie and Maggie recruited volunteers, organized fundraising and ordered the donated glasses. With the local groundwork laid, SRW began shipping eyeglasses, donated through the Lions Clubs of Wisconsin, to

The value of goods distributed and services rendered by our mission team was \$108,132. That includes the values of the following: examinations, medications, eyeglasses dispensed, airfare, room and board, and transportation for team members while in Nicaragua. The cost of this mission to SRW was \$550. That means that for every dollar supporters donated to SRW, \$196 worth of services and goods were delivered to our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua.

Niquinohomo.

Once there, our team examined not only teachers, but many other patients, from two to 98 years old, most of whom had never had an eye exam. After each exam, our dispensary team selected glasses that were closest to the patient's prescription. Fortunately, in most cases we had suitable glasses to offer the patient. In some cases, however, the prescription was so high that we simply did not have appropriate glasses for them. We are now working to have glasses made in the U.S., and will send them to the patients soon.

One particular patient comes to mind. *La señora* was about 74 years old, and had walked to Niquinohomo from Catarina—a good hour and a half. She came because she couldn't sew or read, and she hoped we could find something for her. She left with her first pair of glasses ever, some eye drops for the itching and burning of the hot sun and dust, and *abrazos* (hugs) from all of us. Today, she's enjoying clear vision and the ability to perform life's daily tasks.

Our team of volunteers included ophthalmologists Dr. Eric Steffan, a glaucoma specialist from UW-Madison; Dr. David Gamm, a pediatric ophthalmologist also from the UW, and Dr. Neil Lucchese, a pediatric ophthalmologist from Dean Clinic.



Eyeglass Mission Team members are—left to right: Eric Steffan MD; David Sisson; Jean Batha; David Gamm MD; Hadja Balde Dowling; Eric Bright; Mary Dowling; Maggie Laurent; Bonnie Heberer; Patti Jahnke; Neil Lucchese MD; missing is Lorena Kannel.

Patti Jahnke, an ophthalmic technician from Dean Clinic and Eric Bright, a manager from LensCrafters, worked with Bonnie and Maggie in the eyeglass dispensary. Jean Batha, a volunteer from Milwaukee, served as translator. Mary Dowling, co-director of SRW, worked with her daughter-in-law Hadja Dowling, as well as with local volunteers, in vision screening. SRW sponsored this mission, and arranged shipment of equipment and glasses to Niquinohomo. Through

SRW, Wisconsin volunteers shared their time and expertise to provide new, clear vision to the people of Niquinohomo, working side by side with local volunteers.

Visit our website at
www.dean.org,
for more information about
Sharing Resources
Worldwide.

SRW Board President: The Mann for the Job

SRW is pleased to announce that Dr. David Mann has agreed to serve as our first Board President. Dr. Mann is a charter member of the Board, and has a long history of medical mission activity. A pediatric orthopedic surgeon at U.W. Hospital and Clinics since 1988, Dr. Mann has traveled regularly since the early 90's to Central America, to share his expertise and improve the lives of children. Dr. Mann lives in Monona, Wisconsin. His wife Heather, Founder and Executive Director of the Urban Open Space Foundation (a non-profit organization which rescues urban plots for

green space), provided invaluable guidance as SRW began. Dr. and Mrs. Mann have two children: Maggie, a high school sophomore; and Eland, a high school graduate who is enjoying his second senior year in Istanbul, Turkey, with the Rotary Youth Exchange. All the Manns are well adjusted, except for one of their two dogs, whom David describes as very skittish and somewhat neurotic.

Dr. Mann has proven his dedication to the Board in almost three years of faithful service; and his history of mission participation reveals his personal dedication to SRW's

goal: to improve the lot of our brothers and sisters in need. During his tenure as President, Dr. Mann hopes to see SRW become more independent, increase its financial stability, and broaden its medical-goods service. He sees himself as part of a team which depends upon the dedication of "a great board and excellent volunteers. If it weren't a group effort," he states, "we couldn't be where we are today, and it's a privilege to serve as SRW's first Board President. SRW provides a great service to people around the world."

Live from Lisa, November 2004

SRW Co-founder Lisa Fernandez wrote last month from Matagalpa, Nicaragua, where she was overseeing the Sixth Annual Fall Wheelchair Distribution, sponsored by the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Wheelchair Project.

Wheelchair distribution started here on Wednesday, November 3. Over the last three days we have fitted and distributed over thirty wheelchairs, and by the end of the next week, close to 100 wheelchairs will have been given out to needy children and adults in Matagalpa and the surrounding barrios, at no cost to the recipients. This will bring the total number of wheelchairs donated by WNWP over the last six years to more than 700 wheelchairs!

We have a very well organized team here, and the distribution process flows smoothly. Each child is measured and evaluated by a physical therapist before the fitting process begins. The wheelchair technicians are ingenious and exacting in their work. They will take as much time as needed to figure out the best solutions and adaptations of the chair selected for each recipient.



Mom looks on as workers adjust young Kendal's stroller chair.

These first days of the distribution we've had a very good selection of chairs, and each child has gone away with a nearly ideal wheelchair. It always gets harder as the distribution progresses and the inventory of chairs diminishes. Still, we find a solution to every challenge, and ev-

ery child leaves here with a customized wheelchair and a new sense of freedom.

When the fall distribution is complete, we'll have a closing celebration, but the work will continue after we depart. The wheelchair shop WNWP founded here in Matagalpa is in op-

eration year-round, and local technicians will provide wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and other devices as they are requested. The Wisconsin/Nicaragua Wheelchair Project is something we can all be proud of, and on behalf of the people in the Matagalpa area, I thank you who have contributed to this project over the last six years.

SRW Factoids

Between June 1 and November 1, 2004, shipments have gone to the following destinations:

- Guatemala
- Nicaragua
- Sierra Leone
- Community nonprofit groups in the Madison area
- Chiapis, Mexico.

Shipments to destinations in Nigeria, Guatemala, Honduras, and Iran are expected to leave our SRW warehouse in November 2004.

Between January 1 and November 1, 2004 SRW:

- shipped over 230 tons from our warehouse in Madison to destinations around the world
- logged over 200 hours per month from volunteers serving SRW
- delivered over \$1,626,400 worth of material and service in shipments and missions.



Challenge Grant

SRW is blessed by the support of some major contributors, who provide grants and other forms of monetary gifts. We thank the following for recent gifts to support our programs.

Pizza Hut of Wisconsin/
Middleton Sunrise Rotary Club
Worldwide Charitable Trust
John and Janet Van Den
Wymelenberg Foundation
Charisma Foundation
Madison Community Foundation
Clay Price Fund/Madison Community Foundation—the donors of this fund would like to offer a challenge to other groups, foundations, or individuals to match this donation of \$20,000 to SRW.

Thank you all! You have improved lives and opened up possibilities that would be nothing but unfulfilled dreams without your help.

Live from Lisa: A Trip to Mulukuku

Join indomitable SRW Co-Founder Lisa Fernandez as she travels to Mulukuku, a remote farming community in the mountains of eastern Nicaragua, for a four-day follow-up visit.

November 6th, 2004

I got up at 4am to shower and prepare for the trip to Mulukuku, then hopped into a taxi for the trip across town to the bus station. Of the 8 hour bus ride to Mulukuku, about 45 minutes was on paved road. The rest was either mud or dirt. The bus trip comes complete with mud, chickens, roosters, lots of pressing human flesh, and no restroom stops (therefore, nothing to drink!). Moments of beauty throughout - the tenderness of a papa with his baby son on the bus, a glimpse of a beautiful and exotic bird out the bus window, watching a passenger give up his seat to a mother carrying a small child.

I arrived in Mulukuku hot, hungry and dirty and made the short walk to the small compound of buildings



Sister Sandy Price and helper admire newly arrived school desks in Mulukuku.

that houses Sister Sandy and the young sisters and others who work with her and the programs she oversees. It is a beautiful spot, with lots of exotic trees and plants, and animals everywhere- horses, ducks,

chickens, roosters, and the resident pet parrot. The buildings are very primitive and simple, but the exteriors are painted with beautiful murals by local artists. The atmosphere is gentle and kind, and I was warmly greeted and fed rice and beans, tortillas and coffee. All our meals there were rice and beans and tortillas, with the additions of duck or chicken on occasion. (You know meat is fresh when you just saw the chicken get its neck wrung about an hour before dinner) And the tortillas!! They are puffy and fragrant and delicious!

Mulukuku was everything it needed to be and more, and though it was not an easy four days, it was very rewarding and necessary. I want all of you who have helped with the Mulukuku school desk project to know that there are desks everywhere you look! In the buildings, in the streets of Mulukuku, and of course in the schools. The school supplies are in use all over the community. The medical supplies are in use at the local health clinic run by Nurse Dorothy Granada. Everywhere you look, you see things SRW has sent, and you can be sure that everything will be very well used. I was able to see first hand just what a difference

our efforts are making, and how badly our help is needed.

I spent one day visiting a school way up in the mountains – an hour by bus and then an hour walking



Lisa and friend try out a school desk on the main street of Mulukuku

through mud and fording two streams on fallen-tree “bridges”. Though the trip was a bit harrowing, it was worth every step. For there in that remote mountain school were those cast-off desks we gathered from schools, sheds and barns all over Wisconsin! And there were these kids sitting in them, so proud and happy. What an improvement over the dirt floor which had been their seat for so long! They were very shy at first, but then opened up and sang for us. They asked politely if we could send them baseball equipment: they have absolutely no sports equipment or anything to play with. As we walked back from the school, a boy came by on horseback and offered me his horse to ride back out to the road. It was great fun trekking through the hills on horseback and it kept my shoes dry too!

You may wonder how those cast-off desks arrived in such a remote community to begin their new lives. Earlier this fall, they were unloaded from the container in Managua and

New Frontiers for SRW

SRW is very fortunate to be working closely with two new U.S.-based nonprofit organizations which will make it possible to ship medical supplies and equipment to Africa. Working with *Afrihope International, Inc.*, we will be able to send our first shipment to Nigeria this month. In

October, our first shipment to Sierra Leone arrived safely in this West African country, thanks to the efforts of *H.A.C.E. International*. Partnerships like these make it possible for SRW to reach out to brothers and sisters around the world, delivering health and hope.

transferred to cattle carts, which transported them to Mulukuku. From there, fathers of the students have been picking them up to carry them *by horseback to the mountain schools*. The school we visited was by far the closest – many are an all day trip by horseback. But one way or another, those kids *are* getting their desks and supplies!!

To SRW the people of Mulukuku say “THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU! Sit down and have a toast to yourselves for your great work” (quoted from an email from Sister Sandy. This project is a HUGE success, and worth every bit of effort we’ve put into it.

Eager to Serve

Never underestimate the power of nine-year-old boys! Daniel and Trevor Sweet, twin third graders in Arlington Heights, Illinois, organized a collection drive that is greatly benefiting schoolchildren and families in Mulukuku, Nicaragua.

Inspired by a children’s book that describes American children helping victims of World War II, the Sweet boys went in search of a service project. Sharing Resources Worldwide provided a perfect venue; and the boys, with help from teachers, classmates and family, embarked on a major collection drive. Thanks to their efforts, SRW’s shipments of cast-off Wisconsin school desks to Mulukuku have also contained school supplies, clothes, linens, toys, and many other needed items.

Thank you Trevor and Daniel!!



From Wisconsin to Nicaragua with love: school desks await transport to their new homes



Hundreds of school desks from Wisconsin are now putting smiles on the faces of schoolchildren in the mountains of Nicaragua



Founded in January 2002, Sharing Resources Worldwide makes surplus and recycled medical supplies, durable medical equipment, and related items and activities available to needy populations around the world. SRW endeavors to improve the health and quality of life of its recipients and to empower them to live with increased dignity, independence, and hope.

We do this through three areas—medical missions, shipping and the wheelchair project.

All donations are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to THE DEAN FOUNDATION, with “Sharing Resources Worldwide” written on the memo line.

In the Works for Sharing Resources Worldwide, 2005

The following mission trips are scheduled for this coming year:

- Medical/Surgical Mission to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, January 2005—This surgical team plans to work with Providence World Ministries, a local relief organization, to provide orthopedic and eye surgery for children

- Medical/Surgical Mission to Lima, Peru, March 2005—An SRW team will work with Casa Hogar Juan Pablo II to provide plastic surgery and eye surgery to local children

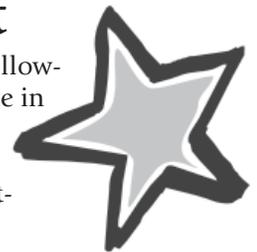
- Eye Glass Mission to Guinea, Africa, November 2005

- Annual Wheelchair Mission to Matagalpa, Nicaragua, Fall 2005

In addition, a special evening is planned during February 2005, to celebrate the contributions of SRW’s loyal volunteers. Without their efforts, none of these mission trips could occur.

Wish List

SRW seeks the following items to include in shipments for the many community projects of our partners in Nicaragua.



- School supplies
- Kitchen items (pots and pans, utensils, dishes, etc)
- Canes for the blind
- Small trampoline
- More school supplies
- Basic tools (hammers, shovels, pickaxes, wheelbarrows, saws, etc.)
- Electric and treadle sewing machines
- Serger sewing machine (older model in good condition is fine)
- Fabric of all kinds
- Notions (zippers, thread, scissors, trims, etc.)
- Craft supplies
- Sheets and blankets

Alliances

We are often asked, "How do you accomplish so much at SRW?"

The answer is easy: with the help of flexible good-natured volunteers, community support, and local companies and individuals who believe in our mission and support our efforts by offering in-kind services. *Alliance Trailer Services* of Madison is one local company that assists SRW, by offering their trailers for temporary storage and staging of items waiting to be shipped, a great help to us as we stage or prepare to send three-to-four shipments per month. To *Alliance Trailer Services* and others who offer such support, we say **Thank You** for being part of our team.

SRW also wishes to thank the following for in-kind contributions, inventory and products, and other types of support:

Adams Lutheran Church
Aljans
Americares

Attic Angels
Beaver Dam Hospital
Bonnet Prairie Lutheran Church
Capital Candlelighters
Dean Clinic
Dean Foundation
EVCO
G E Healthcare
Genesis Painting
Grey Horse Studio and Lisa Otto
Gunderson Lutheran Hospital and Clinics
Hope Haven International
Hospice and Hospice Families
Ingleside Nursing Home
M. Ross Menard
Madison United Hospital Laundry
Many individuals and community groups
Marshall Erdman and Associates
Meriter
Midwest Biomedical
Owens and Minor
Penske Trucking
Physicians Plus
Print Tech

Spectra Print
St. Johns Lutheran Church
UW Hospital and Clinics
Wheelchair Recycling Project



Kendal beams his delight with his new chair

Under the umbrella of the Dean Foundation, Sharing Resources Worldwide is able to serve as a tax exempt charitable 501 (c) (3) organization.

www.dean.org



Visit us on the web at the Dean Foundation website: www.dean.org under Community Projects.

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