

FOCUSING ON THE IXCÁN

EYE CARE AND EYE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE IXCÁN REGION OF GUATEMALA

Vol. 11 Issue 3

Fall 2015

AUGUST 2015 AMIGOS TRIP

DR. SCOTT PIKE

For the 13th consecutive year Amigos Eye Care, from Pacific University, teamed up with Enfoque Ixcán for a very successful mission trip to Ixcán, Guatemala. Everyone at Enfoque Ixcán is grateful and extends a big **“Thank You”** to the students on this year’s trip: The team leaders—Tori Kennedy and Shaun Waayenburg, from the class of 2016, and from the optometry class of 2018; Rebecca Chun, Maggie Fuentes, Danielle Guenet and Stephanie Norberg. We were fortunate to also have Elena Fuentes with us who provided invaluable Spanish translation skills. The doctors on this year’s trip were all former student travelers: Dr. Nina Nemetz, ’09. Dr. Chris Nisbet, ’13 and Dr. Brian Arvidson, ’07. This was Bri-

an’s 9th trip to Ixcán and the 33rd trip for me.

In our 4 days of clinics we saw over 1,127 people and dispensed 373 pairs of glasses. We also identified 52 people needing eye surgeries, including 44 for cataract surgeries and 2 with suspected glaucoma. Most of these people have been scheduled to go to our referral eye clinic five hours away to have their conditions treated. These surgeries are paid for by our generous donors. They deserve a heartfelt “Thank you” as well.

Our planned new clinic is still waiting for the completion of the new Ixcán hospital. It is progressing, although slower than we would like. The walls are up, and the roof is next. Once the

outside work is done on the hospital, we can set a schedule for our construction.

I began the trip with a few days at the clinic where we send people for eye surgeries, the Eye Clinic Vincent Pescatore, in San Benito, Petén, Guatemala. I hadn’t been there before and wanted to meet the doctors and staff who have been so good to our patients. The clinic is run very efficiently.

In 2014 they examined over 13,000 people and completed 3,700 eye surgeries. I’m came away with a high degree of confidence in their work and I’m glad we have such a professional facility to care for our Ixcán patients. It was a successful trip with many people to thank, and with many thankful people.



“We identified 52 people needing eye surgeries, including 44 for cataract surgeries and 2 with suspected glaucoma.”



2015 AMIGOs Delegates

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ TRIP REPORT
- ◆ AMIGO STUDENT PERSPECTIVE
- ◆ EI NEWSLETTER QUALITY CONTROL
- ◆ SPOTLIGHT
- ◆ CLINIC UPDATE



Maggie measuring the eye for glasses

INSTRUMENT DONATION

A very big "Thank You" to Heine North America, an ophthalmic instrument company. Representative Lindsay Morgan donated an ophthalmoscope (an instrument used to look inside the eye) for our eye health promoter, Felipe. Felipe is gaining experience in detecting cataracts. The ophthalmoscope will help in his training.



Don't forget to go to [AmazonSmile.com](https://www.amazon.com/amazonsmile), select Enfoque Ixcán, so a percentage of each of your purchases supports EI's efforts.

OUR TRIP TO GUATEMALA

**By Magdalena Fuentes,
Pacific University College of
Optometry Class of 2018**

I was so lucky to experience a little bit of everything this nation has to offer such as beauty, pride, poverty, growth, history, food and everything in between. My trip to Guatemala opened my eyes to the various levels of health care outside of the United States. I traveled with a group of 5 fellow optometry students and 4 doctors from Pacific University College of Optometry. Along with us traveled my mom who speaks fluent Spanish and was our group's translator. From this trip I learned about the importance of strong communication with patients and great teamwork between optometrists.

I have traveled to Guatemala before to visit family but this was the first time I traveled to a country with a mission group. I can speak and understand Spanish and so I felt a great connection with the people. I learned about the instability of the nation's government and about how a lot of hospitals don't have enough supplies they need to treat people. There are many groups from the United States that donate

supplies and medications to Guatemalan clinics but sometimes they do not provide the proper education on how to administer these products. I was so lucky to have traveled with Dr. Pike and his non-profit organization, Enfoque Ixcán and other members from AMI-GOS, also a non-profit organization. Not only did we provide free eye exams and glasses but we also met with a group of nurses from neighboring health clinics in the area and talked to them about common eye diseases and problems they would encounter and how to treat them.

We were able to see over 1,100 patients in four days. By the end of the week I can honestly say I look forward to doing this for the rest of my life! Working close with my classmates and ODs made me realize that picking Optometry as my career is also like picking my second family. We encourage one another and bounce ideas around and we all have the same main goal; which is to help our patients.

At the end of our trip we were lucky enough to travel to places like El Lago de Atitlan, Tikal, and Antigua. We met amazing people along the way like a man named Tony who was our tour



One of Maggie's patients with their new glasses

guide in Tikal. He experienced Tikal as a young child when the Mayan Temples were being discovered. We also met Samuel, he was from one of the twelve tribes that sit at the bottom of three volcanoes surrounding Lake Atitlan. We were able to try so many new fruits like maracuya and liches as well as delicious dishes that involved fried plantains, yum! The country of Guatemala amazes me with its history, people, beauty and food. I look forward to visiting again very soon.

ENFOQUE IXCÁN IS A FAMILY MISSION

Have you ever received your newsletter and wondered why your mailing label is not even close to straight...basically sideways? Although we are working on quality control, our Newsletter Team is still in training! As the "Team" gets older they are becoming great helpers and supporters of El and learning wonderful lessons of giving that will last a lifetime.



Newsletter Team—Perrin, age 8 and Link, age 6

COUNCIL OF ELECTORS

- J. Eric Anderson
- Dr. Shannon Currier
- Suzanne McCann
- James Harrison Pike II
- Joene Pike
- Connie Running
- Dr. Ronald Craig Stout



Manuel Canil

SPOTLIGHT: MANUEL BY ALI DURBIN

Among the first pioneers to settle the remote Ixcán region in the 1960s, Manuel is a soft-spoken yet fierce defender of human rights. He left behind atrocious working conditions and poor pay at the large coastal plantations to carve out a new life with land of his own in the lush Ixcán. For his role in building a community from scratch and in supporting the struggle for liberation, Manuel is mentioned in the books "Reweaving the Torn" and "Seeds of Freedom" by Clark Taylor and "Paradise in Ashes" by Beatriz Manz.

Nowadays Manuel grows corn, raises bees, and tends groves of pineapple, oranges, coconuts, and other tropical fruits. He harvests cacao to roast and grind into chocolate. He is politically active in his community, local cooperative, and the national movement for indigenous peoples' rights.

Over the past years, Manuel's eyesight began to fail, and he had trouble recognizing people. His work in the fields became fraught with risk: he was unable to detect dangers in his environment or adequately navigate the rough terrain between his house and fields. He started to lose sleep at night, worrying that he would go blind.

This February, Manuel sought out Enfoque Ixcán's services. He was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes. In February

and April, he traveled to San Benito, Petén for surgery.

He recounts that his experience at the San Benito clinic was positive: "We were all treated with respect by the staff and doctors, and the results were good." He praises Felipe, Enfoque Ixcán's eye health promoter, for "helpfully taking care of us on the trip and making sure we used our medicines correctly after the surgery." Manuel even enjoyed the healing post-operative time "because I spent lots of time with my grandchildren, and they were good about taking care of me. Even their friends called me Abuelo (Grampa)."

Manuel notes a stark difference between the services Enfoque Ixcán grants and those offered at private clinics. He knows a man from the Barillas region who was unable to undergo cataract surgery because it was prohibitively expensive, at a cost of Q15,000 (about \$2,000). Enfoque Ixcán, on the other hand, provides patients with surgery and transportation free of charge; the only expense patients incur is for their food while on the road to and from the clinic.

Now healed, Manuel only uses eye drops for occasional dryness. He feels immense relief and gratitude for his restored eyesight. He remarks, "Now I have confidence when I'm walking and am able to work without fear."



Return Service Requested

Nonprofit
US Postage Paid
Eugene, OR
Permit No 384

ENFOQUE IXCÁN

CLINIC CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

An important thing to have when working on a project in Guatemala is, patience. Rarely do things happen at the same pace as we are used to in the U.S. We are waiting for the completion of the new hospital in Ixcán before we build our new clinic, and that depends, to an important extent, on local and national politics. The new hospital is about 50% completed, the walls

are up, but it still needs a roof. The elected president and vice president have resigned and been arrested for corruption (customs fraud). The country is voting for a

new administration in late October. Hopefully, when the dust settles, the new Ixcán hospital will proceed quickly and we can get started on our clinic.



New hospital in the works

CONTACT US

ENFOQUE IXCÁN
13670 NW Pettygrove
Portland, OR 97229
503.277.9711
EnfoqueIxcán@aol.com
Visit us on the web at
www.enfoqueixcan.org

ENFOQUE IXCÁN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Scott Pike, president
Dwight Fleck, treasurer
Maureen McCrae, secretary
Dr. Brian Arvidson, member
Ali Durbin, member
Amanda Terhes, member