

# FOCUSING ON THE IXCÁN

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

## ANNUAL REPORT

Spring 2016

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### February in the Ixcán...a Bend in the Road

On this year's February trip our eye care team included my wife, Joene, and Vicky Graham, an optometrist friend from Boulder, CO. The 3 of us saw some patients, restocked the inventory of glasses, helped Felipe and Pedro, our eye health promoters, with training techniques, and met with our friends at the public health office, and the clinic which performs eye surgeries for us.

Every trip has a bend in the road we hadn't expected. The clinic we have been hoping to build in Playa Grande, pending the completion of the new hospital, is still on hold. The hospital construction process is proceeding at a snail's pace. This has put us on an alternate path. With the help and advice of a close friend, Emiliano Panjoj, we are making arrangements to meet and make a presentation to the mayor of Ixcán, to have the municipal government consider donating a piece of land for El to build on. Emiliano, who has close ties with the mayor's office, feels it is a possible with the current mayor and his council. We're planning to have all the information and documentation ready for a presentation later this spring.

*Continued on page 2*

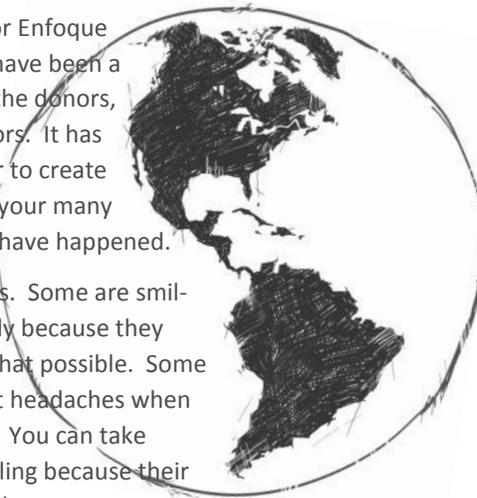
*If you enjoy the stories and information in our newsletters, let us know. Send me a message. I look forward to hearing from you. ~ Dr. Scott Pike*

### 2015 Success—You Did It!

2016 marks the 20th year of service for Enfoque Ixcán. I want to thank all of you who have been a part of this great eye care project, all the donors, all the volunteers, the board of directors. It has taken a lot of people working together to create this successful organization. Without your many years of trust and support it wouldn't have happened.

You have brought smiles to many faces. Some are smiling because they can read again, simply because they now have reading glasses. You made that possible. Some are smiling because they no longer get headaches when they read and studying is actually fun. You can take credit for that one also. Some are smiling because their cataract surgery freed them from blindness.

*Continued on page 2*

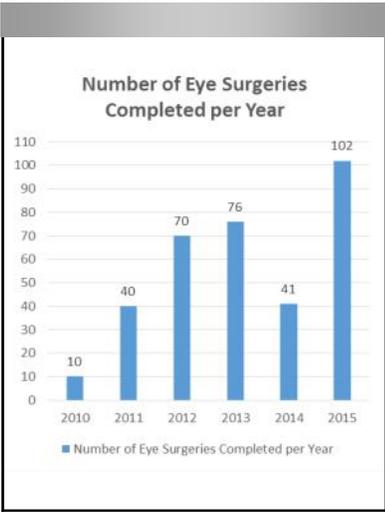


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### Welcome Dr. Mattione

The Enfoque Ixcán Board of Directors is very pleased to welcome Dr. Cristin Mattione as a new EI Board member. Cristin is a graduate of Pacific University College of Optometry. While at Pacific, she became acquainted with Enfoque Ixcán through the AMIGOS program, a student group that organizes trips to provide eye care in developing countries. She went on the student trip to the Ixcán region in 2009 and helped to lead a trip in 2010. Currently, she works part-time as an Optometrist specializing in Vision Therapy in Lynnwood, Washington. Cristin enjoys spending time with her husband and toddler.



Dr. Cristin Mattione

## 2015 Success...continued

*Continued from page 1....* A surgery you made possible with your support.

So many people in Ixcán have smiles on their faces from the amazing help you have provided with your generous donations. But, more than that, you have put a smile on their lives. That's right, an eye surgery or a pair of glasses changes lives for the better.

In 2015 you funded 110 eye surgeries and provided over 540 pairs of glasses. Since the project started 20 years ago 428 eye surgeries have been paid for by you, our donors. That means that ¼ of the surgeries you have provided were completed last year. And that means Enfoque Ixcán has become an important part of health care in this neglected region of Guatemala.

We've done this very efficiently. Each year around 94% of our budget goes to our program, making eye care and eye health education accessible and affordable. The people think of Enfoque Ixcán when they think of eye care.

And we're still growing. Our success has created new needs. As our eye health promoters become more skilled in diagnosing cataracts, we need to fund more surgeries. As the people learn that poor vision can be corrected, we need to fund more eye glasses.

As we continue toward 25 years of service, I'm asking for your continued trust and support. We've created a good team for caring for our neighbors in need. Please help us as we move forward.



*Don't forget to go to AmazonSmile.com, select*

*Enfoque Ixcán, so a percentage of each of your purchases supports EI's efforts.*

## February in the Ixcán...Continued

*Continued from page 1...* Enfoque Ixcán has completed the last step in becoming authorized as a non-profit in Guatemala and it is now official! This legal step will give us more legitimacy in the country as we deal with national and regional government agencies.

Our eye health promoters, Felipe, Pedro and Arnulfo, continue to impress me with their devotion to Enfoque Ixcán. Felipe took nearly 150 patients to the eye clinic, Visualiza, last year resulting in 110 eye surgeries. This is a 230% increase over 2014. The cost for these surgeries was less than \$7,300 or equal to 2-3 cataract surgeries in the U.S.

One of the reasons I started this project was that on my first trip to Ixcán, in a week visiting 4 different villages, I only saw one pair of glasses. We're making good progress.

We are only able to continue this success with your help. Please consider increasing your donation in 2016 so that more people may be served.



Danielle Guenet with 11 year old patient (center) and friends at the AMIGOs clinic in the Ixcán

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### A Student's Eye on the Ixcán...by Danielle Guenet

I was hesitant to go on an Amigos trip after only one year of optometry school under my belt. I kept thinking what if I don't know enough about disease yet? What if I won't be able to keep up? But when the opportunity arose to go on an Amigos trip to Guatemala with Dr. Pike and Enfoque Ixcán, I took a chance and I am so grateful that I did. Students who have gone on trips with Dr. Pike in previous years had told me of his unwavering dedication to the people of Guatemala and how intense and educational clinic days were. I do not think anyone could have prepared me for how affirmational and invigorating my time in clinic would be for me. I now know that I have chosen the right profession and how important it is to try and use our skills to help those in need. *Continued on page 4*



Young patient being examined



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## A students perspective...continued

*Continued from page 3...* Starting on day one in clinic, I was figuring out patients' prescriptions and dispensing glasses in a language I had never spoken before. Although there was a language barrier, I was amazed at how much emotion could come across in so few words. It is something I take for granted everyday, the ability to put on my glasses as soon as I wake up. I loved seeing the smiling faces of a schoolteacher who could finally read their students homework, or a farmer who has never had sunglasses before for working outside.

My favorite patient was an 11-year-old girl, about the same age as me when I decided I wanted to pursue this career. She was quite enamored with the color of my red hair I think, and would not stop taking pictures of me, following me around and giggling. She was embarrassed when I was the one who examined her eyes, but then we both burst out laughing and took pictures together. Even though we did not exchange any words, I know that I will never forget my number one fan, and I hope she feels the same.

