



*Advanced Valley Eye Associates*

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## **EYE SURGERY MISSIONS: Giving back to others by taking eye care to the poor!**

It seems that we all have the inner desire to “give back” when we can. Fortunately, I’ve been blessed with a profession where we can go to medically desolate regions, and with the right team and backing, restore sight to those who have no other options for care. It’s a fabulous experience to make such a profound difference in people’s lives.

Our Mexico trips are to San Blas, a small town in the State of Sinaloa. (By the way, it’s not the fishing resort known as the San Blas Islands!!). Twice a year, we fly in small private planes for most of the day, usually taking about 3-4 legs to the journey, to arrive at our Clinic at about 6pm. We’ll usually find about 50-100 people lined up in the dirt road outside the doors, already waiting for “Los doctores Americanos”. We quickly get our things in order and will see a large number of patients until late in the night, mainly to get prepared for surgery early the following morning.

Through the following 2 days, we see patients in the Clinic while simultaneously doing surgery. Our “operating suite” has a concrete floor, bare walls (complete with raw wires and pipes sticking out here and there!) and a broken air-conditioner. We have learned to operate in an “elbows down” position, so that sweat rolls away from the surgical site!! It is not rare to have our power go out completely in the midst of an operation, and we simply finish the cataract surgery with assistants holding flashlights under the microscope. The stories can go on and on!!

Somehow, we’ll usually end up seeing 400-600 patients in the Clinic, and perform about 60 surgeries over the 2-3 days. The vast majority of the surgeries are cataract, but we also do eyelid surgeries to correct turned lids or remove tumors. Occasionally, an anesthesiologist is present, so that we can put children asleep to repair “crossed eyes”. As you might expect, this is especially rewarding for the entire family.

Until these past few years, these trips have been completely personally funded. While we receive donated products from instrument and pharmaceutical companies, the transportation for our nurses has been covered by the doctor. Recently, we’ve received funds from local donors. This may be the beginning of an exciting new chapter in what we can offer our patients! The doctors are already discussing how we can put this to good use, and bring additional services to this most needy population.

**If you are interested in becoming part of this project by helping with a tax-deductible contribution, PLEASE let us know. We'll be happy to work with you and make it as easy as possible. And, THANK YOU for your generous heart!**

**Checks can be made out to “Yolo Sightsavers”, and we can give you a bona fide tax deductible letter of contribution.**

Additional information:

In addition to our semi-annual trip to Mexico since the early 90's, I have been on trips to China, the Philippine Islands, the Republic of Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Vietnam. Some of these trips are made with a group of doctors and others have been solo trips. All help to teach the local doctors what can be done for their people.

Without organizational and financial help, these trips wouldn't be possible. We give credit to the many involved that “make it happen”!

*The umbrella supply groups for  
our Mexico trips:*

LIGA International  
[www.ligainternational.org](http://www.ligainternational.org)

Surgical Eye Expeditions  
[www.seeintl.org](http://www.seeintl.org)

*Our heart and gratitude goes to  
our major local donors:*

St. Lukes Church,  
Woodland, CA  
Grace Valley Christian Center  
Davis, CA  
The Woodland Rotary Club  
Morning Group  
The Paulsen Foundation  
Woodland, CA

If you have any questions or interest in helping “make the blind to see”, we would love to hear from you. Ask anyone in our office how you can participate.