

Vision for Camasca

By: Whitney Scoville

Rain Water Collection, Library, and Vacation Bible School -- 2016

The First Presbyterian Church of Chili (New York) made our first trip to Honduras in 2016. Our mission was to build a water collecting system, build a library and provide a vacation bible school program for the children at the Good Shepard Bilingual School in Camasca Honduras. While we were there, God revealed a new need for our church to address. On this trip we learned that the area has virtually no vision care. We learned that kids drop out of school when they are unable to see the board or read their books. We learned that access to vision care was very limited.

Vision for Camasca -- 2018

This led to our second mission and the official “Vision for Camasca” project! By God’s grace, our church returned to Honduras in 2018. Hundreds of patients lined up for vision screens and glasses! We connected with two separate organizations -- Shoulder to Shoulder and the Lion’s Club. We stood as a bridge between these two organizations with a hope and prayer that together something would grow.

From the beginning, the dream was to build a self-sustaining access to vision care. We started this vision project with boots on the ground in 2018 and have continued through two very unique projects this year in 2019.



Collaboration with Project HEAL -- Summer 2019

Over the summer of 2019, our church worked collaboratively with a student from Duke University’s Project HEAL team. Brian Linder was completing college credits through a learning abroad opportunity between Shoulder to Shoulder and Duke University. He did a great job collecting data and helping to increase knowledge about the Lion’s Club in La Esperanza to the people of Camasca and surrounding areas. Brian confirmed a need for education and awareness around vision care and services.

It’s hard to put to words how this next project came about. But, imagine a whirl wind of emails, text messages, and spotty international conference calls where we shouted over the pounding rain of Honduras and redialed again and again when internet dropped the call. In this beautiful chaotic exchange, a new idea was developed -- to bridge a communication gap by providing a continuing education opportunity for Health Promotors throughout the region of Intibucá. Or, in other words, a FIELD TRIP!!



Field Trip – Fall 2019

Health promoters work within the community health centers providing regular presentations on health topics to the people throughout the seven town region of southern Intibucá. With lots a wonderful support from Shoulder to Shoulder, we were able to coordinate a continuing education field trip for health promoters to La Esperanza. This trip included eye exams for all, a tour of the Lion’s Club Clinic, and educational materials for them to use in their community presentations. Word of mouth and first hand experiences are the best teaching opportunities. These health promoters will take their experience and new knowledge back their communities to share. This extends the reach of the vision mission well beyond what we could do on our own.



Update from Minsis Ramos (Shoulder to Shoulder)

The event was attended by 22 promoters and 3 supervisors. Each of them was excited to have the opportunity to offer one more project to the communities they work with. Likewise, the members of the Lion’s Club were happy to make new alliances that would allow them to continue serving the communities of Intibucá.

We rented a bus, and arrived in La Esperanza. The Lion’s Club staff made known what they are doing in the five areas in which they work: sight, childhood cancer, hunger, diabetes, and the environment. They focused on their vision services. Health Promoters asked many questions

about all the services. After that, all of the Health Promoters had an eye exam; five needed glasses. Plus, one needs eye surgery, and the Lion's Club will make the necessary arrangements for that to happen.

We ended the morning with a delicious lunch, and then back on the bus for the 2 hour trip back home.

Follow-up: I contacted the coordinators of the promoters to ask them about the project. I was told that everything is going well. In some communities, they have found up to 3 to 4 people who need eye services, and they were referred to the Lion's Club.