

2008 Vision Clinic
The Eden School, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

To provide the gift of vision – to a 3 year old child - to primary, middle and high school students - to older adults - this is one of the greatest joys we have ever experienced. The joy of seeing precious little faces light up and adults beam when they could read John 3:16 in Spanish, read the eye chart from a distance, see the leaves on the trees, read the clock or the chalkboard a few feet away or just to be able to thread a needle and make a living sewing crafts or garments. During the five day clinic, the Vision team saw 507 patients and fitted 495 pairs of eyeglasses. Some patients received two pairs of eyeglasses – one for near and one for far vision correction. Imagine seeing so many happy faces!!!

Each morning Eden School students visited the vision clinic and afternoons were overflowing with members from the mission churches, desperately and patiently waiting their turn to be seen. On the last day, the community at large was invited to the clinic and potential patients began lining up outside the school gates at **10:30 p.m.** the evening before in hopes of being seen sometime the next day. It was not unusual for a patient to wait 12 to 15 hours, many of these hours in the pouring rain, and they were thrilled that they had the chance to be seen by the American vision team! It was very humbling to experience the amount of gratitude shown by each Bolivian for their “new” glasses. For most, it was their first pair of eyeglasses and their first opportunity to see clearly – whether at age 9 or 40, 50 or 75 years old. Yet we turned away so many patients due to the large numbers who wanted to be seen but could not due to lack of time. And yes, we did experience sad little faces for many children and some adults because we did not have glasses in the prescription needed or glasses which would properly fit their faces. For the 2009 Vision Clinic we will concentrate our efforts in collecting children’s eyeglasses. If you are willing to help lead an **eyeglasses collection as a service project at your school**, please contact Charles and Margaret Peacock at 676-0891 or email MargaretPeacock@nc.rr.com. **We need all shapes and sizes of eyeglasses and sunglasses – but especially children eyeglasses.**

To operate a vision clinic requires many resources and God met our equipment, eyeglasses and medicine needs through nonprofit organizations and individuals. Kendall Optometry Ministry, Inc. loaned First Presbyterian a portable auto-refractor which volunteers used to provide an objective measurement of a person's refractive error and prescription for eyeglasses. To operate a successful Vision Clinic we needed a large supply of eyeglasses - 5 times the number of eyeglasses than would be dispensed. We are very grateful to CrossLinks International, a Christian nonprofit in Falls Church, Virginia who provided over 2,000 eyeglasses through a partnership with the Lions Club regional center of Northern Virginia. Additionally we want to provide a heartfelt thank you to the many FPC members who contributed their used eyeglasses; parishioners at Calvary Episcopal Church in Tarboro who collected eyeglasses as a church mission project and donated these eyeglasses to FPC; Calvary members Lloyd and Candis Owens and Joe and Bernice Pitt who contributed 144 new reader eyeglasses; Joe Niebauer, Eye Care Associates, who contributed 60 new reader eyeglasses, 20 pairs of sunglasses and a supply of artificial tears; and Dr. Mike Bryan who obtained a large supply of various eye medicines.

It was thrilling to see God’s hand in matching people to tasks where they could give their best efforts. Our vision team included FPC vision clinic coordinators Charles and Margaret Peacock who selected and fitted eyeglasses; Dr. Mike Bryan, a Raleigh optometrist, reviewed eye health and wrote eyeglasses prescriptions; Joe Dunn, a local businessman, operated the auto-refractor and assisted in fitting glasses; FPC member Beth Cox translated and assisted with the auto-refractor and selecting glasses; Bonnie Millis assisted with selecting glasses; and Judy Echols served as the patient coordinator and translator and is the wife of a neurologist serving on the medical team. Additional translators included Wanda Easley, a Spanish teacher from Broughton High School and three full-time translators provided by the Eden School.

Providing the gift of vision – what a joy and an opportunity to serve our fellow man, woman and child in one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere - to God be the glory!

Matthew 25:40 - “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Below are Pictures and a few stories from our 2008 trip to the Eden School

Story #1: One woman came to our doctors for help. It was clear to Tracy Butler (Wake Med ER nurse from Ernest Myatt Presb. church), that this woman needed visual help along with her medical care. She sent the woman to the eye clinic where Dr. Charles Peacock (FPC) fitted her for glasses (see below):



The woman is shown here reading the bible to test for her “near” vision. “Far” vision was tested by looking at leaves on the trees) When she was satisfied with her glasses, Tracy Butler came over to give her a warm hug and have her picture taken with the woman and her husband. (See below)



This kind of story and care was repeated 395 times this year (2008). It was a true joy to work with these people. This case was special, however, because it showed co-operation between our clinics. Often our MDs treated people for an immediate problem and then sent the person to dentistry when teeth were bad.

Story #2: Our FPC vacation church school “Avalanche Ranch” (2007) made soft, snuggly teddy bears for kindergarteners at the Eden school. These bears were given to the children on Thursday morning (March 17, 2008). Margaret Peacock recognized one of the kindergarteners who received a bear because Margaret had fitted her for glasses the day before. Below is a picture of the little girl reading the message she pulled from the pouch in the back of the bear. Each bear carried a different message. Some said, “Jesus Loves you.” Some said, “A friend – to a friend” Each one was personalized by the church school member who wrote the message. See the picture below. Note the glasses!



Below are pictures taken of people in the vision clinic as they worked with a young girl. The picture shows Mike Bryan (Raleigh Optometrist) with Wanda Easley (semi-retired Raleigh Spanish teacher translating for Mike – Wanda worked at Broughton High School and taught Spanish to some FPC members!). Mike checks each person for eye disease and special defects that might be present.



Below is a picture of Beth Cox (FPC member and translator) and Joe Dunn (CEO of a Raleigh Safety Company) testing the eyesight of a youngster. The boy's mother is looking at her son. The instrument is an autorefractor obtained free of charge from Kendal Optometry Ministry, Inc (Kentucky). It determines the correction needed without a word from the child! It is a very handy instrument!!!



Finally, below are two pictures of people waiting to be seen at the vision clinic.

