

Philippine Mission Serves 2,014

“Now I can get a job and help my family..”

The Philippine Islands were still suffering the devastation of Typhoon Frank when Dr. James Weyrich, O.D. arrived with his mission volunteers under his organization, EyeCare WeCare Foundation, to bring the gift of vision to indigent villagers. His mission concluded January 10th. The following is his letter to NWLERC (Northwest Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center) based in Lacey, Washington and operated by Lions Clubs volunteers.

Report from Completed Medical Vision Mission

Organization: EyeCare WeCare Foundation

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Dates of medical missions Jan 2-3, Jan 5,6,7,8,9,10 2009

Location: Two Days, Bago City, Negros Occidental, Philippines;

Six days on Panay Island, Province of Iloilo, one day each at: Municipality of Calinog; Municipality of Lambunao; Municipality of Janiway; Municipality of Cabatuan; Municipality of Pavia and Haro, City of Iloilo.

Indigents receiving eyeglasses: 2,014

We returned two weeks ago from the Philippines after our January medical vision mission with 2 barangays in Bago City, Negros Occidental and 6 Municipalities in Northern Iloilo on Panay Island. Iloilo was the hardest hit community of the Philippines during Typhoon Frank in June. The worst Hit was Pavia. It was covered with about 50 feet of water and the aftermath with the mud and destruction is highly visible still. The water systems in 3 of the communities have yet to



2,014 vision impaired indigents were cared for in the eight-day mission to Panay Island of the Philippines.

be fully restored so much of the water was brought in. We treated a record total of 2,014 indigents for the 8 days.

We brought all communities much needed medications and medical supplies that were supplied to us by AmeriCares Foundation and the Alcon Foundation. It was truly a life changing experience for many who are now able to function in life because they can now see. There were many that were led in and walked out. One lady came back inside the mobile clinic three times to give me a hug because now she can see to walk around, people, trees and she stated “now I can get a job and help my family instead of being a burden and have to be led everywhere” She was a minus 11 Diopter myope. Meaning she focused at about 1” from her face and she saw worse as things were further away. She saw in the neighborhood of 20/1500, which means what a normal person could see at 150 feet, she would have to get up to 2 feet to see. We eas-

ily found the prescription for her in our supply of eyeglasses. We found quite a few people with high prescriptions similar to this on this mission. We are indebted to the Northwest Lions Eyeglasses recycling Center for your contributions on this mission and for prior missions.

The crossing by ferry boat with the large bus was ok, but the bringing in on and off was very challenging because of tide and angle of the ramp, the bus bottomed out both front and back. (Pictures included) It is really not a “Roll on Roll Off” ferry as they state. It is either a back in and drive out or a drive in back out. With all of the



large trucks that were also loaded, it took well over one hour to load the ferry and one hour to unload it. We also brought our pickup truck and our SUV along with our well trained 19 Filipina volunteers. This medical mission was in many ways tougher than any the foundation has done before. We were living off island so three meals a day for the volunteers had to be provided.

Each Municipality provided a place for us to sleep but it was often times



it was one large room for all of us and we slept on the floor with no mats a few nights. It is very hot and humid at night. Showers are taken with garbage cans filled with water and a water scoop. Most toilets do not flush with the handle; you do that with a bucket of water also. There is never toilet paper — you have to carry it with you. In spite of these little challenges, it was a joy. None of the volunteers complained, everyone in all of the communities were great hosts and after interviewing everyone who volunteered, all were overjoyed that they participated and look forward to the next medical vision mission.

We had originally planned to do our June 2009



Dr. James Weyrich O.D. examining a Philippine child during the eight-day mission his foundation, EyeCareWeCare, spent on Panay Island. At right, the girl with her new view on life.



mission on the Island of Cebu, but while we were in Iloilo we had requests to go to Davao and also to Palawan. All three Islands would be OK, but each requires special consideration and of course we have to closely watch the expenses. We feel now that we will now be doing our next medical vision mission in JULY rather than the previously stated JUNE mission. We will be finalizing the location and dates within the next few weeks so I will get to you the dates and I will email to

you our request for eyeglasses.

Thank you again for your support with the recycled eyeglasses. Without the eyeglasses, we have very little to offer to poor

people. Vision is our specialty and our organizations that rely on volunteers to help us reach our goal to provide free eye care to the very poor people of the Philippines.



Dr. Weyrich and his team of dedicated volunteers in the Philippines