

# FAIRFAX HOST LIONS CLUB SPEARHEAD A COMPREHENSIVE MULTI-COMPONENT VISION CARE, MEDICAL & SURGICAL MISSION TO THE SITAGU AYUDANA HOSPITAL IN SAGAING , AND THE SITAGU METTA HOSPITAL IN INLE LAKE, MYANMAR

By PCC Dennis Brining  
Program Chairman  
February 27, 2013

After almost a year of planning and preparation, a team funded by Lions Clubs International Foundation jointly staffed with Lions made up of optometrists from Virginia and a PDG from Minnesota along with ophthalmologists from the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology ([www.WIeyeMD.org](http://www.WIeyeMD.org)) landed in Yangon, Myanmar on January 19, 2013 to conduct a multi component medical mission that would last until Feb 2, 2013. The mission focused on the disadvantaged and underserved communities in several locations throughout the country and served as a major LCIF country development effort for further Lions activities in the future.

In addition to funding from LCIF, we also received contributions from the Fairfax Host Lions Club of Virginia for \$1,000, the New Berlin Lions Club of Wisconsin for \$2,000 towards cost of travel for the WAO ophthalmology residents, Allergan and Alcon ophthalmic products worth approximately \$2,000 from each, and Phaco supplies from Alcon valued at \$2,000.

Other contributors included: Bausch & Lomb, MST, American Academy of Ophthalmology, Eye Surgery and Laser Center of Wisconsin, Micro Medical Devices, and Katena. The Lions Eye Glass Recycling Center of 24-A also supplied 1,000 pair of recycled eye glasses to support our effort as well.

Our primary vendors in this venture were Appasamy, Ltd out of India for Intraocular Lens (IOL's) and surgical materials and Visual Compassion out of Texas. Materials and equipment purchased from these vendors were excellent.



Our in-country host for the mission was the Venerable Dr. Ashin Nyanissara (Sitagu Sayadaw), Chancellor of the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy. The Academy oversees 25 hospitals across the country, the majority of which focus on vision. He provided the official letter of invitation, along with lodging and food for the entire team for the first week of the mission while we were at the Sitagu Ayudana Hospital in Sagaing Hills, Sagaing Myanmar.



Dr. Nyanissara was supported by Ms. Jennifer Conn who served as our liason during the planning and implementation phase of the effort. She also helped get the team our work permits, as well as clear our thousand pounds of equipment and personnel luggage through customs seamlessly. She was supported by Sitagu U Han who spent days working on getting our shipment of IOL kits and surgical supplies from India into the country. After 18 days, the shipment was finally cleared and moved to our first mission location at the Sitagu Ayudana Hospital.

Team members in the effort include: Lions and Optometrists from Virginia, District 24-A, Lions from Minnesota, District 5M-6, Ophthalmologists and technical support staff from the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology, and support staff from Global Community Service Foundation-GCSF ([www.globalcommunityservice.org](http://www.globalcommunityservice.org)) who provided travel and in country logistics support for a total contingent of 21 personnel over the two week period.

Special thanks go to Marcia Selva of GCSF and her staff who worked on getting all the travel and visa's in place and to Max Talcott, Sao El Sandar Myat and Dr. Myat Myat Mon of GCSF who worked in-country to make sure everything ran smoothly to ensure the success of the mission. Because of their efforts, the movement of personnel and equipment was just about flawless.

A summary of mission personnel and function on the mission follow:

### **Lions Clubs International**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lion to be Meera Alibhai   | Vision screener, support as needed                        |
| Lion Suleiman Alabhai OD   | Lead Optometrist  |
| Lion PCC Dennis Brining    | Project Chairperson, Team Leader, Diabetes training       |
| Lion Linda Brining         | Vision screener, data base development, support as needed |
| Lion PDG Dennis Kelly      | Lead Vision screener, Auto Refractor                      |
| Lion to be Ahn Thu Phan OD | Optometrist   |
| Lion Suzanne Tolson        | Vision screener, support as needed, Diabetes training     |

### **Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Sumanta Chaudhri MD         | Pre-op evaluator 1 <sup>st</sup> week only                               |
| Kweku Grant-Acquah MD       | Ophthalmologist -3 <sup>rd</sup> year resident-1 <sup>st</sup> week only |
| Bruce Miller                | Video Recorder   |
| Vernon C Parmley MD         | Ophthalmologist 2 <sup>nd</sup> week only                                |
| Michael Parmley             | Medical Student 2 <sup>nd</sup> week only                                |
| Rich Paul                   | Executive Director, WAO  |
| Arvind Saini MD             | Ophthalmologist 1 <sup>st</sup> week only                                |
| Robert D. (Bob) Sullivan MD | Ophthalmologist  |
| Lion Kevin P Wienkers MD    | Ophthalmologist  |
| Justin Yamanuha MD          | Ophthalmologist-3 <sup>rd</sup> year resident-2 <sup>nd</sup> week only  |

## Global Community Service Foundation

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Lion Marcia Selva  | President GCSF and Global Spectrum Travel-Travel and logistics |
| Max Tolcott        | Regional Director-Logistics                                    |
| Sao El Sandar Myat | Shan State Representative-Logistics                            |
| Mon, Myat Myat     | Dr. Plastic and Reconstructive surgery-Support                 |

Not counting the original country assessment conducted in early 2012, and meetings in Austin Texas, with Dr. Nyanissara to plan the mission, the team spent more than 4,610 man hours in the planning and actual implementation and support of the effort and preparing the final report. This amount did not include the hours spent by the hospital staffs in both locations. This was an extremely complex effort and had far reaching implications across a very large geographical area within the country.

Patients came from as far away as 1,000 miles to see the “American” Doctors who are perceived to be the best and last bastion of hope when all else fails. Reportedly, our Mission was also the largest and most diverse of its kind to be hosted at both hospital locations. Our patients ranged in age from 11 months to 97 years old.

The Mission lasted approximately 2 weeks running from January 19<sup>th</sup> to Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 and took place at the Sitagu Ayudana Hospital in Sagaing Hills, Sagaing Myanmar and at the Sitagu Inle Lake Hospital in Inle Lake Myanmar.

We had originally planned to do a ½ day vision screening effort in Bagan, but were unable to do this as the permit to do this outside of a hospital setting takes several months to acquire and a good deal of red tape. Other than this one change, all other proposed activities were carried out as originally planned and approved in our grant proposal.

Key results of the overall mission follow:

1. Discussions & meetings with US Embassy and USAID personnel in Yangon concerning our Mission and the way forward in Myanmar.
2. Conducted over 610 eye examinations, and vision screenings.
3. Conducted 118 cataract surgeries.
4. Dispensed over 250 eye glasses, and 500 pairs of sun glasses.

5. Introduced the concept of low vision rehabilitation into the local medical communities.
6. Introduced the concept of preventative Diabetes health care. Most of what is currently done with Diabetes is reactive medicine and is not directed towards education on how to mitigate the disease in the community.
7. Outfitted a small developing medical clinic in Nyaung Shwe Township with advanced analytical equipment to help meet the growing needs of the local community in the area around Inle Lake which is a catchment area of some 40,000 people. This effort also established a key focal point for Lionism to spread in the future.
8. Since this was our first time at either location, and there were many unanswered questions, we purchased and/or brought enough equipment and supplies to cover every contingency to insure mission success. Not only did we achieve all the program objectives with this approach, but we ended up with excess materials we left behind to support future mission teams that come to both these locations for some time to come.
9. Combined, we had a great impact on a large number people from a wide geographical area within the country that will last for a very long time. Along the way, a number of senior individuals instrumental in the success of our mission were made honorary Lions, and our Logo was left on a number of facilities along with plaques commemorating the effort.

PCC Dennis, the Program Chairman noted in the end that “We were blessed to have the best of the best on this mission. At the beginning, we stumbled a little but by the time we were finished, the team had evolved into a unified force for good and Darwin would have been proud of the end product. They had set the gold standard for which others can only strive for on future efforts. Their dedication and commitment to the success of this effort is greatly appreciated by me and the LCIF senior management.”

Once the Mission was completed, the Brining's, Alibhai's and Suzanne Tolson went on to Bangkok, Thailand to meet with PIP Kajit Habanananda to debrief him on the trip and then on to Chiang Mai, Thailand to meet with local Lions Clubs to determine their interest in following our path into Myanmar on future efforts.