



# MOST Ministries

## 35th Anniversary Edition

## MOST's "Accidental" Eyeglass Ministry

By Cindy Pine (MOST Ministries Mission Engager)

Distributing eyeglasses during a Medical/Dental mission trip to Haiti in 1990 was an "after-thought" and almost didn't happen. Ask Betty Masch how she was inspired to join her husband Gary on his third mission to Haiti as an oral surgeon, and then distribute used eyeglasses at the dental clinic. This outreach event would be the inspiration for Don and Gayle Sommerfeld to expand their servant activities in Haiti to include distribution of eyeglasses.

"I wanted to be helpful on the mission trip, but not be in the way," says Betty. "As I pondered how I could help, a mandate came from our on-the-ground hosts in Haiti, Gladys and Roland Mecklenburg who were in Ann Arbor to fundraise. They dropped by our house with a duffle bag of about 300 used eyeglasses. 'Bring these eyeglasses to distribute to the Haitians,' they said."

A scavenger hunt ensued. A visit first to an optometrist friend in Ypsilanti, then to the U of M's eye clinic, yielded a vision chart made of "E's" and advice to tape the chart to the wall 10 feet from the patient. Betty then dived into the duffle bag, comparing each pair of eyeglasses to her own distance ones, and sorting them into three bags of "weaker," "about the same as mine," and "stronger." Betty was prepared! Or was she?

She still was apprehensive about the project, not certain her efforts would be successful for the patients. It was then that a Bible verse on paper dropped out of a glasses case in her duffle bag: "I can do all things because Christ gives me the strength." Philippians 4:13. That was the confirmation Betty needed! As soon as she was in Haiti, with the help of two translators and the "E Chart," Betty measured the vision



of each clinic patient, judging whether they needed glasses from the "weaker," "medium," or "stronger" bag. She was thrilled to see that each person received an improvement in their eyesight, and for those who couldn't be helped because of cataracts or infections, sunglasses were given.

Eyeglass teams still are the most requested by our hosts. Five days of eyeglass clinic can provide glasses for 500 to 1000 locals, permit the local pastor to share the Gospel message with his community, and offer improved eyesight to a population that doesn't have the cash resources to buy new eyeglasses from local optometrists.

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Thirty-three years of MOST Ministries eyeglass teams are further confirmation that the first trip was part of the Lord's will for this ministry. Here's a look at how a typical eyeglass team distributes glasses:

- Around 3,000 eyeglasses are taken to the field for one week by a team of 10 or more. The team brings back all glasses that are not distributed.
- Each pair have been inspected, cleaned, bagged and labeled by faithful volunteers at our Mission Center in Ann Arbor.
- The eyechart of "E's" has become a chart of hands with the fingers pointing in one of four directions. It represents a universal language understood by people with any alphabet.
- The clinic follows a pattern: registration, initial assessment, testing at both ten feet and book-distance; selection of the right eyeglasses and retesting; necessary adjustments; and presentation of the Gospel by the local church team, handing out witness bracelets for all and finger puppets for small children.
- Individuals who need both distance and reading glasses receive both. And UV-protected sunglasses are given to everyone who comes to the clinic.
- All testing and fitting is done by lay-persons. Optometrists accompany the team either as volunteers or when required by the country where we're serving.

The results are stunning! Our teams have observed the following: Elderly eyes can clearly see the facial features of their family, perhaps for the first time. They gain independence and steadiness walking. Students can see the board at school. Adults are given corrected vision for tasks such as sewing and reading. Transportation workers become safer drivers. Completely blind individuals gain partial independence walking with the use of a white cane. Smiles, tears, hugs, "thank-you's," and "Praise God!" are common reactions at our clinics.

MOST's staff expects that corrected vision also impacts the livelihoods of the recipients of our glasses. A study by the nonprofit "VisionSpring" recorded income increases of 33% in low-income communities, when following up on women in Bangladesh who had been given reading glasses (not from MOST Ministries) one year earlier. People who received glasses were able to return to work, reported a better quality of life, and achieved a reduction in blurry vision.

Thank you, Don and Gayle Sommerfeld, for being a blessing to over one quarter of a million people around the world through thirty-five years of medical, clean water, eyeglasses, VBS and ESL teams, and so much more! And all while proclaiming the Gospel.



# 35 YEARS OF IMPACTING THE WORLD FOR JESUS CHRIST

19  
89

**1st team:**  
Organized by Don &  
Gayle Sommerfeld  
to Haiti



19  
91

*first eyeglass team*



Mission Center:  
*Concordia University in Ann Arbor*

19  
96

501C3  
Status

Full-time Director: Gayle

19  
92

20  
01

*Recognized Service  
Organization  
of the LCMS*



20  
08

**100,000+**  
*Lives Impacted*

*MissionExcellence*  
(formerly SOE)  
accredited member

1st water team

20  
10



New Mission Center  
Phoenix Dr. in Ann Arbor

20  
12



**1,000+**  
Water Filters Distribut-

**50**  
countries

20  
19



20  
17



20  
22



**150,000+**  
Eyeglasses Distributed

20  
23

**250,000+**  
Lives Impacted





# The Language of Missions

an evening of music & poetry with Tanner Olson & Blake Flattley

MOST Ministries and the Michigan District, LCMS invite you to attend The Language of Missions - a benefit concert to raise awareness of the rich history and support for mission efforts. Join us for an inspirational evening of music, poetry, and storytelling with Christian performers Tanner Olson and Blake Flattley. In celebration of MOST Ministries 35th anniversary, this concert will be held at St. Luke, Ann Arbor which is where our founders were members when MOST Ministries was formed.

**Saturday, October 5 | St. Luke Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor**  
**register at [michigandistrict.org/missionconcert](https://michigandistrict.org/missionconcert)**

Cost is \$35 per person (\$45 at the door)

Sponsored by Michigan District Church Extension Fund; St. Luke, Ann Arbor; St. John, Adrian;  
St. Paul, Hamburg; Redeemer, Jackson; Christ Our Savior, Livonia





Haiti Team in 1998



First mission team led by Don & Gayle to Cite Soleil, Haiti in 1989



Panama Eyeglass Team in 2002 - using "E" chart



Mexico Eyeglass Team in 2010

## MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

This is a wonderful way to remember or honor a loved one

### IN MEMORY OF

Dorothy Courtright by Robert & Barbara Morton  
 Neil Finkenstadt by Barbara OConnor  
 Denny Oechsner by George & Elise Locke  
 Maxine Bernreuter by Dorothy Featherling  
 Dr. David & Kay Starks (both were members of the first MOST Board of Directors) by Don & Gayle Sommerfeld

Sharon Dietrich by Richard & Linda Schumacher  
 Lois Morton by Robert & Barbara Morton  
 Duane & Katie Renken by John & Susan Drach  
 Jack & Jean Moeller by Kathleen Dickerson

### IN HONOR OF

Marie Boettcher's Mother by Myrtiss Riediger  
 Sandy Hardies by Carol Schmidt  
 Will & Barbara Hoffmeier by Joel & Diane Robinson

Sandy Hardies by David & Colleen Marasus  
 Sandy Hardies by Gerald & Shirley Taylor  
 Bethel Larsen by Scott & Gail Smith

Gifts can be made online or mailed

For information, contact Kelly Bone at 734-994-7909 or [kbone@mostministries.org](mailto:kbone@mostministries.org)



## Mission Opportunities Short Term

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