

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Miramonte Football players and students in Africa this summer with the International Vision Volunteers

By Jon Kingdon



Photos Yanjean Hwang

David Roman, Carson Blair, Leo Wampler, Charlie Hwang, Faye O'Neill, Grant Jedlicka, Katie Barmmer, and Charlie Metherd, visiting Victoria Falls (one of the Seven Wonders of the World)

The International Vision Volunteers is a nonprofit that was founded thirty years ago by Dr. James "Bud" Tysinger, an ophthalmologist whose goal was to bring sight and eye care to the underserved in the world. Tysinger is a retired partner in Orinda resident, Ivan Hwang's, practice and for the past ten years, Ivan and his wife Yenjean, a doctor of infectious diseases, have been taking their four sons to Zambia to work with the Vision Volunteers as often as three times a year.

"Bud saw how a simple cataract surgery can prevent blindness and make such a big difference in people's lives in Africa, so in 1995, he began raising funds to build a freestanding eye clinic in Zimba, Zambia with a modern operating room next to the Zimba Mission Hospital, which was completed in 2001." Yenjean said. "Zambia was chosen because it has always been a peaceful country with no wars and it's primary language is English, though there are 72

tribal dialects."

The Hwang's youngest son, Charlie, is a running back on the Miramonte football team. Prior to this summer, his teammate David Roman and his sister had made the trip to Zambia with the Hwangs. This year, Roman, Grant Jedlicka, Kate Barmer, Faye O'Neal and Grant's mother Kore McGinnis, a neonatal ICU nurse, had already planned on making the trip.

"I was speaking about how it was a great experience and opportunity going to Africa and getting a background doing work and helping people in the field of ophthalmology," Charlie said. "My other teammates Carson Blair, Leo Wampler, and Charlie Methard said that it sounded like something they would like to do so my mom got in touch with their parents and made the final arrangements, along with getting their shots for yellow fever, malaria and hepatitis."

Yenjean handles the administrative aspects of

running the clinic and seeing that supplies are in order and bills are paid in compliance with Zambian law. "Making the trip takes a lot of planning as we bring over 22 bags of medical supplies, each weighing 70 pounds," Yenjean said. "The flights took about 40 hours, leaving San Francisco and flying 11 hours to London with a five-hour layover and then an 11-hour flight to Johannesburg, South Africa, with another four-hour layover and then a two-hour flight to Livingstone, Zambia, and then an hour drive to Zimba."

Life is not very easy for the citizens of Zambia, as the country is trying to restructure their debt along with unemployment problems and drought conditions. There can be blackouts in the country, but the clinic runs on solar power that was funded through the Orinda Rotary and other local rotary clubs, so there is no problem seeing patients, but away from the hospital, power could be out for 12-13 hours at a time.

Yenjean also set the schedules for the volunteers, splitting them up in teams with one group going to the schools and doing vision screening to see who needed glasses, and then bringing them back to the clinic for a full medical examination. Others would help in the clinic, being runners in the operating room, sterilizing the instruments, helping to move the patients, and bandaging them up after surgery.

"I was very proud of all of them because we were doing so many surgeries and they always got things ready for the next surgery which really sped things up, and we would rotate all of the students to work in each area," Yenjean said. "We would do over 70 surgeries a week and see 60 patients a day, and our kids screened about 300 children. This year we also brought a dentist with us, and she did screenings of the kids at a soccer tournament."

"Maybe the best experience was a social one - meeting new people and being able to help the people of Zambia that were coming from a far less privileged community and helping to make their lives better," Charlie said. "We got to know the Zambians outside of the clinic, playing soccer with them. We also brought footballs to throw around which was new to them, but they were very enthusiastic."

The students also got the opportunity to see the country away from the clinic. "Zambia is a beautiful country, and all the kids got out for a weekend," Yenjean said. "We went on an overnight safari in Botswana at the Chobe National Park, seeing

lots of animals and then hiking down to the bottom of Victoria Falls and then back up."

The group made it a point not to let anything go to waste. "We also converted our shipping containers into little libraries for the community and stocked them with books that we brought as well, since access to books is limited over there," Yenjean said. "The various trips have already inspired one volunteer to major in biomedical research and three others are planning on going to medical school after college."

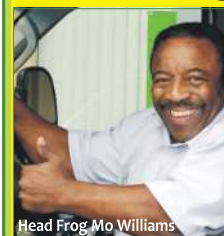


Leo Wampler removing dressings from patients the day after their eye surgeries



From left: Korrie McGinnis (NICU nurse at UCSF and Grant's mother), Grant Jedlicka, Tobias Chibenga (Zimba Nursing School Faculty), Charlie Metherd, and Charlie Hwang, delivering donated nursing textbooks to the nursing school

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