The McCannas in Myanmar

After two full days of travel Peter and Mary Kay McCanna arrived in Hsipaw, Myanmar on January 18th, 2015 with a group from Combat Blindness International (including board members Dr. Suresh Chandra and Dr. Peter Holm). They immediately got to work at the Buddhist monastery-turned-hospital in partnership with Global Community Service Foundation and the local Myanmar head monk.

The team, which included 3 Myanmar ophthalmologists, performed 185 cataract surgeries over the course of 4 days, making it the most successful eye care mission in that area thus far (it is estimated that only 1,600 surgeries per million people were performed in Myanmar in 2014). While Peter said, modestly, that it might not have made a huge impact in the fight against avoidable blindness, the trip made a large impact on himself, seeing the difference it made these people’s life.

The McCannas were especially struck by the simple stoicism with which these people, the poorest of poor, reacted to their suffering. Handling their blindness with great resilience and strength. The people were overjoyed when they regained sight, freeing their family of the burden having to care for them.

Although during their trip they had a great team of eye care professionals and volunteers, providing top notch service, this is not normally the case. In the rural areas of Myanmar the access to ophthalmologists is 1 to 500,000 (versus 1 to 12,000 in the US*). Treatment throughout the country can be very sporadic and disorganized, and most eye care professionals are concentrated in cities, and do not perform surgeries. Like other areas around the world, the training of, and access to, eye care professionals is key to ending avoidable blindness. (Continued on next page)
Right now, all over the world, men and women are sitting alone in their homes because they are blind and can’t work. Children are not in school because they can’t see well enough. Eyesight will change everything for them, and you have the power to make that happen!

This is the season of thanks, of light and darkness, and of giving. When you donate today, you make a very tangible impact on someone’s life. You give someone the ability to see again.

Thank you so much for partnering with us to reach the most vulnerable around the world. You make it all possible!

World Sight Day 2015

On October 1st CBI hosted its annual World Sight Day Gala at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery. The event raised enough funds to support 6 vision centers in Odisha, India, each center will provide eye care for nearly 10,000 people. These vision centers are a doorstep to eye care in the area, providing basic eye care and vision screenings, while referring more serious cases to a nearby eye hospital.

This year’s keynote speaker was Dr. Andrew Bastawrous, the Co-Founder of PEEK Vision. PEEK is a smart phone application and adaptor that allows an operator to provide professional vision screenings from his or her mobile device. His project is revolutionizing the way eye care is being approached in the developing world. The product allows the vision screener, who is trained and trusted locally, to easily travel to remote areas to examine patients, the information is then paired with a system to increase patient diagnoses, follow up and tracking.

CBI and Peek are excited to partner together, as this will provide game-changing tools and systems to help in our goal of ending avoidable blindness worldwide. Feel free to contact Combat Blindness International with any questions about PEEK or our partnership with them.

Above: The entrance to the 2015 World Sight Day Gala
Below: Dr. Andrew Bastawrous chats with some guests following his presentation.

"We were able to offset a small part of the great need that exists in Myanmar. They benefit. We benefit. Being present to their way of living, their difficult lives, their suffering and then witnessing their joy at regaining their eyesight was an honor.”
- Mary Kay McCanna

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Combat Blindness International would like to thank the McCanas, and all our friends, for all of their help, whatever it may be, in making an impact in the global fight against avoidable blindness.

If you would like to find out ways you can help, whether you’re ophthalmologist, or a barista, feel free to contact us at info@combatblindness.com or PO Box 5332, Madison, WI 53705

A special thank you to all the other volunteers on the trip; Mitra Sinha, Biswanath Sinha, Sue Holm, Sunita Chandra, and Cheena Chandra.