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# SPIRIT OF SERVICE

NEWSLETTER

*“It is health that is real  
wealth and not pieces  
of gold and silver.”*

—MAHATMA GANDHI

## INCREASING ACCESS TO SIGHT-SAVING SURGERY IN WESTERN TANZANIA

Above: Dr Evarista in surgery, Tanzania

Sometimes a little support can go a long way. Bugando Medical Centre in Western Tanzania serves 16 million people but could not perform cataract surgeries on site for lack of an operating microscope. The ophthalmologist would have to transport the patient, staff and supplies to another hospital, perform the surgery, then transport them back to Bugando.

In late 2016, through Seva’s Global Sight Initiative, the Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO) provided Bugando Medical Centre with funds for an operating microscope. KCCO is the largest organization in Africa dedicated to reducing blindness through community

ophthalmology training, and Seva supports its capacity-building efforts by providing training and other resources. KCCO also supports outreach to rural areas to identify people who would benefit from cataract removal; provides surgical supplies; and makes counseling available to help reduce people’s fear of surgery and overcome other barriers to treatment.

In the entire year before working with KCCO, the ophthalmology team at Bugando performed 27 cataract surgeries. In the first few months of 2017 alone, armed with their own microscope and other support from KCCO, they had already doubled that number.

## INCREASING ACCESS TO SIGHT-SAVING SURGERY IN WESTERN TANZANIA



Watch this video to see how the addition of an operating microscope has fundamentally transformed the cataract treatment program at Bugando Hospital: [www.seva.org/bugando](http://www.seva.org/bugando).

“An operating microscope is such basic equipment, without which the program cannot function.”

—PETER KILEO, KCCO Program Manager



Above: Dr. Evarista and Mrs. Rosemary, respectively the ophthalmologist and program manager at Bugando Medical Centre's Eye Department, have seen huge improvements in surgical productivity since partnering with Seva through the Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology.

### Letter from the Executive Director

By the time you read this newsletter, I will have returned from the Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship in Oxford, England. The theme of this year's event is "The Power of Proximity." Here at Seva, we are well aware of the power of getting up close and personal, and how important it is to the work we do with and through our partners around the globe.

Connecting with people in their homes and communities has always been an essential part of how Seva does its work. Whether through technological advancements like telemedicine, which allows an ophthalmologist to examine the retina of a patient hundreds of miles away, or old-fashioned relationship-building by community health workers, our work is all about expanding people's access to eye health services.

Fundamentally, our success depends on connecting with individual people, often in locations that are well off the beaten path. Whether by providing transportation to surgical centers or expanding the range of eye care services that are available locally, we find ways to link people to the care that will maintain or restore their sight. Seva works with our in-country partners to build their internal technical and administrative capacity, as well as their ability to successfully reach into their communities to identify those most in need and connect them to care.

By learning from the work of others around the world and integrating this knowledge into our own efforts, Seva is constantly moving closer to our vision of a world free of preventable blindness.

Yours in Service,

Kate



# GIVING THE GIFT OF SIGHT, YEAR AFTER YEAR

Many people choose to support Seva's work by giving Gifts of Sight for birthdays or holidays. Both the giver and the receiver know they're giving families and whole communities a chance for a better future.

Nancy Neiditz is leveraging a crowdfunding platform to raise \$1,500 to celebrate her 60th birthday.

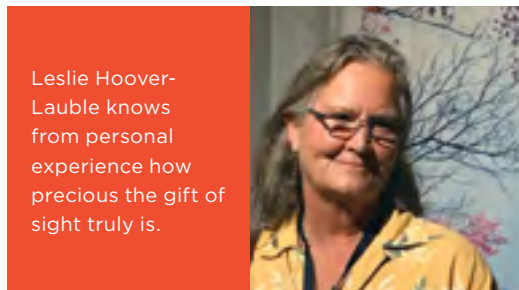


## BIRTHDAY CROWD-FUNDING

Nancy Neiditz has been giving Gifts of Sight since 2002. She learned about Seva through her interest in the works of Seva co-founder Ram Dass. Nancy is crowd-funding a gift for her 60th birthday this year and plans to raise \$1,500, which would fund one day of an Outreach Eye Camp. "If by the end of my birthday we could have 30 people have vision," Nancy says, "that's a win."

## HONORING FAMILY

Leslie Hoover-Lauble has been a Gifts of Sight donor since 2003 and is also a monthly Seva donor. Leslie's brother had child-onset diabetes-related sight issues, so the sense of sight became an important issue in her family. From Leslie's perspective, "The intangible gift of giving someone sight is so powerful."



Leslie Hoover-Lauble knows from personal experience how precious the gift of sight truly is.

Patricia Carrick finds way to help Gifts of Sight recipients find connection with those who benefit from the donations.



## PERSON TO PERSON GIVING

Patricia Carrick has been giving Gifts of Sight for more than 30 years. She picks gifts and cards for each person carefully, so that "they can imagine the person receiving eyesight is someone much like them." Patricia feels that "the business of correcting blindness is very potent — and it's so doable."

## A PERSONAL VILLAGE

Laura Symczyk has been giving herself a Gift of Sight for Christmas every year since 2007, collecting the gift cards in a "village" in her house. When she learned about Seva, Laura recalls she was "astonished that you could restore sight for \$50!"

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# THE PROMISE OF TELEMEDICINE

## Telemedicine, which allows patients to communicate with a doctor via videoconference and share test results electronically in real time, has entered the mainstream.

Studies show that telemedicine can provide care comparable to in-person visits in fields such as mental health, substance abuse, dermatology, diabetes management, and yes, eye care. Telemedicine can also significantly reduce costs for both patients and healthcare providers.

Telemedicine is lately becoming a game-changer in providing eye care to some American Indian communities, where there is a stark unmet need for specialized care. One driver of this need is diabetes, which is twice as prevalent among American Indians as among the general U.S. population. Diabetic eye disease eventually affects almost all people with diabetes and is the most common cause of blindness among working-age adults. The good news is that timely diagnosis and treatment can nearly eliminate serious vision loss from this disease. Unfortunately, due to geographic isolation and a severe shortage of eye doctors in Indian country, only half of American Indians with diabetes currently receive an annual eye exam.

The Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation (KPHC) in New Mexico, in partnership with Seva, is addressing this disparity and is revolutionizing eye care for tribal members in the process. KPHC is using telemedicine to diagnose and prescribe treatment for eye health issues, including diabetic eye disease. Many Native Americans live in rural areas and simply don't have in-person access to healthcare specialists. But most of them can get to a local health clinic. There, community health workers connect patients to off-site eye care providers who might be hundreds of miles away.

Seva's American Indian Sight Initiative (AIS) recently sent representatives from KPHC, led by optometrist Dr. Lindsey Marvel, to India to learn telemedicine best practices from experts at Aravind Eye Care System. Dr. Marvel and her team, in turn, became mentors to the healthcare team serving the neighboring San Felipe Pueblo community. With Seva's input, Dr. Marvel designed and ran a telemedicine training for healthcare workers in Kewa and San Felipe. Additionally, San Felipe can now refer patients in need of follow-up care to the Kewa eye clinic. This leadership practice, of receiving training and mentorship and passing it on to others, exemplifies Seva's capacity building model.

The AIS telemedicine project is an exciting opportunity for American Indian communities to help one another address eye health challenges. In the broader picture, American Indian communities are using telemedicine to leverage scarce resources to address significant unmet healthcare needs. These innovative tools and programs, which continue to evolve, hold great promise in addressing eye care and other healthcare challenges into the future.

Watch a video about Seva's American Indian Sight Initiative and telemedicine here:  
[www.seva.org/telemedicine](http://www.seva.org/telemedicine)



Above: Dr. Lindsey Marvel, Optometrist at Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation, visits an outreach camp in rural India during her visit to the Aravind Eye Care System.



## Love in the Time of Chaos: Full Heart, Open Mind

May 18 and 19, 2018 in Portland | [seva.org/love](http://seva.org/love)



Jai Uttal & Friends



Ram Dass



Mirabai Bush



Rameshwar Das





# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS KEEP THEIR EYES OPEN FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

Uday Gozmiar, pictured above left, was a pastor in Siliguri, West Bengal when he was trained through a Seva-supported program to carry out basic pediatric eye screenings in local classrooms. He was surprised to find that his own son, John, had bilateral cataracts - which explained why he was having trouble interacting with other kids. Uday took John to get surgery and glasses, and now John is in school and having no difficulties. John is pictured above with his father and mother.



Rokehatun and Madhumsri, two field workers from the Alipurduar Hospital in West Bengal, travel door-to-door by bicycle to find villagers in need of eye care and refer them to the hospital for treatment.



Community health workers use everyday equipment like flashlights to conduct initial eye exams that identify people who might benefit from additional eye care services.

Community health workers (CHWs), many of them women, work at the vanguard of Seva's efforts to combat blindness in many regions around the world. These workers - some paid, and some volunteer - conduct on-the-ground outreach to identify people in need of eye care and connect them with services, from eyeglasses to medicines to surgery. CHWs are key to enabling Seva's in-country partners to reach people who would benefit from eye care services but live in remote areas, are uninformed about available services, or mistakenly believe they could not afford treatment.

Often a crucial step in providing eye care is convincing people in need that they will benefit from intervention and services are safe. Such was the case for Radha Devi, a grandmother in northern India's Kanpur area. Devi's community is served by the Govind Nagar Vision Center, part of the network of the LV Prasad Eye Institute, a Seva partner. Devi's vision was deteriorating in both eyes, hindering her from functioning independently.

When a CHW was in the process of going door-to-door to develop a baseline of eye care needs in the community, she noticed Devi struggling to help her granddaughter get ready for school. Trained to recognize the signs of cataract, the CHW encouraged Devi to seek further treatment. Although Devi and her family were at first reluctant to address the issue, the CHW was persistent and encouraging. After several visits, she convinced Devi to get an eye exam and, ultimately, a successful cataract surgery.

With Devi's vision improved, her life is back on track. It took the perseverance of a trained community member to overcome cultural hurdles and help her get the care she needed.



# SPIRIT OF SERVICE

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NEWSLETTER



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## About Seva

Seva is a global nonprofit eye care organization that transforms lives by restoring sight and preventing blindness.

We train local eye care providers and develop self-sustaining eye programs around the world. Seva has helped over 4 million people who were blind to regain their sight in more than 20 countries.

36 million people in the world are blind. 75% of them could see again with your help.

Your \$50 donation restores sight with a 15 minute cataract surgery that changes someone's life forever.

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"Compassion and caring for people in need - that's simply a moral necessity. But it's not always easy to do. Seva makes it easy. They know how to put your donations to work in ways that truly benefit people."

**JOAN BAEZ**  
Singer / Humanitarian  
Activist

### PHOTOGRAPHERS

**Our heartfelt thanks go to all our photographers for generously donating their work.**

Joe Raffanti, Julie Nestingen, Alexandra Prince, Stephanie Serna



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