OneSight has been a great foundation to be a part of in delivering eye care to regions of the world that do not have access to such services.  For more than 25 years, OneSight has been helping millions of patients see better.

I have been so fortunate to be a part of their global mission to give the gift of sight.  In my first mission to Puebla, Mexico, we saw just under 12,000 needy patients (over 10 clinic days) who had traveled for many miles to the clinic.  OneSight had partnered with the International Rotary Club to ensure the logistics were met flawlessly.  They provided bus services to pick up and drop off patients from various villages where the need was great.  Patients would stand in line for hours, many of them elderly, young, sick, and nursing mothers.  It was humbling to see the state of their surroundings.  Learning of their poverty was saddening and it pushed us to work harder to ensure we were doing our best to serve them.  Quite a few patients who had heard about the clinic, traveled by foot from more than 12 hours away with the hope that they could also be seen.  We turned nobody away and worked from 8am-8pm until the last person was through.

After a patient's exam was complete, our volunteers would hand pick, adjust, fit and clean the glasses before sending the patient off with their new eye wear.  All patients went home with a pair of prescription glasses, a pair of sunglasses and drops for dry eye as necessary.  Surgical referrals ended up seeing local MDs that would take the care forward.

Mexico was an amazing experience with extreme highs and lows.  It was very emotional to see such poverty.  We had so many experiences with patients crying because they were seeing for the first time.  I personally felt depressed about the fact that we were only scratching the surface and that the need was so great that it could not be met in a rotating mission.  There needs to be sustainable services there and it becomes impossible if qualified trained personnel can not run a clinic year round.  OneSight is aware of this issue and is working on sustainable clinics to ensure patients are taken care of when we are not present.  I feel this is similar to the AKDN in its efforts to develop sustainability in regions that require aid both economically and socially.  I am currently working on trying to bridge the two networks to see how we can work together to develop these regions.

Our Thailand mission was also heart breaking but also inspiring.  We saw approximately 15,000 patients on a 10 day clinic.  The clinic was set up similarly and everyone worked well together.  Nobody complained of long days or the hard work or the extreme heat.  The group was a well oiled machine by the second day.  It was neat to see how people from different parts of the world could work so well together.  I met volunteers from India, China, Europe, South America, and of course Canada and the US.  It was incredible to see how far OneSight has reached in inspiring individuals to come to the aid of the impoverished.

One note about both missions: something I will take away from each mission I am involved with is the experiences I have shared with so many special people.  Both the Mexico and Thailand groups were amazing.  We all got along so well and endured long hard days together with one common goal: to give the gift of sight.  Many days were exhausting and we would look at the lines to see how many more people we would need to see.  **The idea that one of those people could have easily been our mother, father, sister, brother, good friend, significant other - this is what got us through those days and kept our energy and aspirations high.**  Could you imagine not having access to the most basic necessities? Health care, education, food, shelter.  This was the reality for these individuals and it broke our hearts to see it.

To date For Your Eyes Only has raised over $10,000 for OneSight through donations from colleagues, friends and family.

What did we learn from these missions?

That we complain of issues that seem significant when in the grand scheme of things they are minuscule.  People in these areas have so little, yet their smiles and carefree attitudes tell us that they live a simple life that places emphasis on the big things like family and togetherness.  We have so many luxuries here in the western world and it seems that we have lost these simplistic notions.

What can I take away from my experience with OneSight?

That there are organizations out there that truly care and are doing their best to make a positive impact on the world.  That we can do so much with such little effort and that together we can make a difference in the lives of so many.  That if we can continue to serve these people, we can improve quality of life and elevate their chances of gaining an education and serving within their own communities.

What's in store for my future endeavors?

I will continue to serve with OneSight on a yearly basis.  I would like to go on a mission every year while continuing my fundraising efforts in between missions to collect used eye wear and funds.  I would like to work on bridging different organizations to develop sustainability and hopefully one day have a permanent position in a region that requires the aid.  Long term, I would like to build a clinic with a library and resource center for prospective eye care professionals.  We would one day serve the community in a region that requires such services.  With more individuals trained to deliver eye care, the region would become sustainable.  Perhaps, satellite offices could spawn from the main clinic.  This is my ambition and hopefully it can be a reality one day.