



Long-Time OGS Donor Shares Perspectives Following Visit to Optometry School and Pediatric Eye Care Center in Vietnam

GOLDEN, COLO., December 18, 2023—Industry veteran Robert Weiss, former president and CEO of CooperCompanies and one of the largest individual donors to [Optometry Giving Sight \(OGS\)](#), recently visited Hanoi, Vietnam, to see firsthand the OGS-supported work being done to expand optometry in the country. He met with optometry students and pediatric eye care patients and shared his reflections.

“Myopia is a pandemic, and the visit confirmed the high degree to which we see it. There is still a lot of work to be done in Vietnam and globally,” said Weiss. “A lack of vision is a lack of quality of life. If you can’t see, you can’t read, you can’t play sports—there’s just so much you can’t do. You’re missing the world. But we have the tools to not only correct myopia but prevent its progression.”

Weiss’s connection to Vietnam is a personal one. His recent visit marked his first time back since serving in the Medical Service Corps in the Vietnam War.

“Back then, I went into villages to provide medical care. A lot was going on to help improve the quality of life in Vietnam, but there were no ODs. The profession didn’t exist then like it does now,” said Weiss.

His time in the war inspired Weiss to personally help fund projects to expand optometry in Vietnam, working with key partners Optometry Giving Sight, the Brien Holden Foundation, and Hanoi Medical University (HMU). Together, they established the Pediatric Refractive Error Training Centre (PRETC) in Hanoi and the country’s first optometry school at HMU. In November, Weiss was able to spend some time there.

“I visited the pediatric center and sat one-on-one with three patients, all needing vision correction. None of their parents had myopia,” he said. “It reiterated the trend brought about by less time outdoors and all the near work they’re doing—reading, tablets, TVs, you name it. It showed me just how important it is to minimize the growth in the prevalence of myopia—and its progression—from a long-term perspective.”

Since its inception in 2019, eye care professionals at the PRETC have performed more than 20,000 eye exams, nearly 10,000 screenings, and dispensed more than 4,000 pairs of eyeglasses. At HMU’s optometry school, 233 trained optometrists have graduated, and there are currently 78 students enrolled in the program.

“I spoke to the new class of optometry students and told them how hard they will have to work. I also saw some of the students in action as they performed eye exams at a local

primary school. Seeing their eagerness to learn and continue the profession gives me hope for the future,” said Weiss.

Following his retirement as president and CEO in 2018, Weiss took on the role of chairman of the board of directors for CooperCompanies, a position he still currently holds. Weiss also previously served as president of CooperVision, the contact lens subsidiary of CooperCompanies, and held several other roles within the company since joining in 1977. CooperVision is the largest donor in OGS history, having contributed more than \$4 million over the lifetime of the organization.

Individually, Weiss is also one of the largest donors in OGS history, having donated a total of \$340,000. Weiss said that after visiting the optometry school and clinic in Vietnam, he is even more inspired to continue supporting OGS.

“The need for optometry in Vietnam is an indication of the need in the majority of the world,” said Weiss. “We’re in the second inning of a nine-inning game; we have a long way to go. In the industry, we all have the power to help, and I’m going to do my part to make it happen.”

Contributions from donors like Weiss support the work of OGS to eradicate preventable blindness and vision impairment through the growth and expansion of optometry globally. Over the last 20 years, OGS funding has provided essential eye care services to more than 8 million people, assisted with training more than 14,000 eye care personnel, established more than 130 vision centers, and served people in more than 40 countries. In the last two years alone, OGS has funded more than 30 project partners worldwide, totaling more than \$1.5 million in grants. For more information or to donate, visit givingsight.org.

###

Media Contact

Carson Daniels

McDougall Communications for Optometry Giving Sight

carson@mcdougallpr.com or +1 (315) 427-6394