



NEW ORLEANS FILIPINO AMERICAN LIONS CLUB DISTRICT 8-S PANG MA PHA HOSPITAL OUTREACH

Executive Report

Dear Fellow Lions,

We offer this report of our Vision Outreach project with Pang Ma Pha Hospital in Mae Hong Son, Thailand. This project is an extension of our Vision Mission projects, which are designed to donate eyeglasses to those who might not have otherwise had access to them.

PROJECT HISTORY

Inspiration for service work can come from some of the most unexpected places. After getting a new iPhone, Lion Lance Harwell discovered how great podcasts can be. He was listening to a podcast produced by *Asia Calling* (<http://asiacalling.kbr68h.com/index.php/english/podcast/>) when he heard an amazing story of an award-winning female doctor in the northern part of Thailand who passed up a comfortable job with Thailand's Health Ministry to selflessly work with the hill tribe people in Mae Hong Son, near the border with Burma. Lion Lance, not thinking that anything would come of it, wrote to the correspondent in the podcast, King Kong Janoi, to see if he might be able to learn more about the doctor. Instead, Lion Lance heard from Rebecca Henschke, the editor of *Asia Calling*. Ms. Henschke kindly put Lion Lance in touch with the heroine of Ms. Janoi's story, Dr. Walairat Chaifoo. Through these tenuous connections, the New Orleans Filipino American Lions Club again tried to show what a small world this can sometimes be.



Those interested can hear the podcast that was the start of this project at <http://asiacalling.kbr68h.com/index.php/archives/2136>. The entire email string that began this project is attached to this report also.

THE RECIPIENT

Pang Ma Pha Hospital is in the mountainous province of Mae Hong Son in northern Thailand on the border with Burma. The clinic there is where we can find Dr. Walairat Chaifoo, who has received the annual Thai Rural Doctors Society Award for Outstanding Service to the Rural Poor, Thailand's highest award for rural medicine. For the last fourteen years Dr. Walairat has been providing medical care to the hill tribe communities. She once turned down a senior position at the Public Health Ministry because she wanted to continue working with the hill tribes.

Doctor Walairat is passionate about rural medicine. She has said that she feels it is her duty to improve the health situation in the district. Before she founded Pang Ma Pha Hospital, the 13,000 people in the Mae Hong Son district had to travel three hours to the nearest hospital. Now the hospital treats around 2000 patients each month. Some patients still cannot afford to make the trip to the hospital, so Dr. Walairat makes house calls with her mobile medical team every weekend. They sometimes travel two hours on bumpy dirt roads to get to remote villages that would otherwise have no access to modern healthcare. During the rainy season these roads often become impassable so they have to get out and walk up the steep mountains.

At first some of the people from Hmong, Shan, and Karen hill tribes were afraid to come to the hospital. It took Dr. Walairat time with them to gain their trust. Sometimes there is a language barrier so Dr. Walairat has to use a translator while treating some patients.

PRELIMINARY WORK and LOGISTICS

When we made contact with Dr. Walairat through *Asia Calling*, it took a little time for our intentions to become completely understood. The international name recognition of the Lions Clubs International lent credibility, and we convinced Dr. Walairat to accept a box of donated eyeglasses as a trial at Pang Ma Pha Hospital. If her patients found that they could use the glasses, then we would consider continuing, if not then no harm was done.

Once Dr. Walairat consented, we contacted Lion Don Pastor of the Harahan Lions Club, who assisted us in providing eye glasses. Based on the problems experienced shipping eyeglasses for our Vision Missions, we abandoned FedEx and used the flat rate international shipping boxes offered by the U.S. Postal Service. We shipped 100 pairs of glasses in a single box. The total cost of shipping was approximately \$50.00. At the direction of Dr. Walairat, we shipped directly to Pang Ma Pha Hospital. The shipment arrived in about 14 days.

EXECUTION

Dr. Chaifoo successfully distributed the donated eyeglasses among the hill tribes in the Mae Hong Son District. Photos from her distribution are attached to this report. We direct the reader to the sincere expressions of gratitude shown in those photos.

Within weeks of receiving the eyeglasses from us, Dr. Walairat reports that more than 80% of the unsorted glasses have been donated already, and she is ready for an additional shipment. Clearly, this project is an early success.

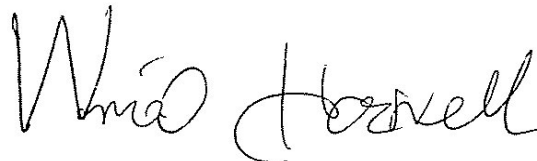
ANALYSIS

This is a low cost, high yield project that any club can do in any country across the globe. Finding worthy partners like Dr. Walairat may seem difficult to do, but inspiration can come from a radio program, TV show, newspaper article or even a conversation with friends. While our club is certainly better positioned than most to identify international partners to work with on projects like this, the history of this project shows that solid, productive, helpful service work can be done inexpensively and without leaving your own town.

As for this particular project, we recommend that the New Orleans Filipino American Lions Club entertain a motion to make this a continuing project for the club. It requires little planning, and the financial investment is limited to the cost of shipping. In terms of value for dollars spent, this project would seem to be worthy of continuation. Lion Lance has offered to continue acting as a liaison between our club and Pang Ma Pha Hospital should the club elect to continue the project.

As always, we are pleased to respond to any questions the membership or other Lions may have about this project.

Respectfully submitted,



Lion Wimol Harwell







From: **Lance Harwell** <Lance@staines-eppling.com>
Date: Sat, Jan 3, 2009 at 3:20 AM
Subject: November 8, 2008 program
To: asiacalling@gmail.com

Good Day,

I just discovered the Asiacalling podcast and I am enjoying them immensely. Thank you for your work.

I am writing about your November 8, 2008 podcast, which included a report of a rural hospital in the Mae Hon Son province of Thailand. Through a local Loins club we may be able to supply used eyeglasses for the hilltribes there. If it is not to much trouble, this is to ask that you provide information I can use to contact the hospital for that purpose.

Thank you for any help you can offer.

Lance

On Thu, Jan 8, 2009 at 11:56 AM, Rebecca Henschke <asiacalling@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Lance,

Thank-you for your email. It's wonderful to hear that you are enjoying the Asia Calling programs online.

Here's the contact details of the hospital you requested. I am sure they would welcome any assistant you could provide.

Dr Walairat Chaifu
Mobile+ 66 0818 38537,
Tele+66-053617445
Email: walaich@hotmail.com

If you don't hear back from them or need more information please don't hesitate to contact me or our correspondent who did the story Kong Janoi kongjanoi@yahoo.com

All the best,

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2009 10:24 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject:

Dear sir

I'm Dr.Walairat chaifoo , I'm a director of Pangmapha Hospital, Maehongson, Thailand.
I heard from asiacalling that you would like to give eye glasses to hilltribe people.

Thank you very much for your kindness. From our data, we have many students and elder people who has a problem of vision.

I would like to know, How can I do to get the eye glasses? If you want to know more detail, please contact me.

Thank you again

Dr.Walairat chaifoo
66818318537

From: **Banyar KJ** <kongjanoi@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Jan 18, 2009 at 12:55 AM
Subject: Re: Mae Hon Soe hospital contact
To: Rebecca Henschke <asiacalling@gmail.com>

I just called Dr Walarat today, she said she have not got any email about eyeglasses.

They are welcome for your aid.

They want to know detail about it.

please resend to her an email again. "walairat chaifoo" <walaich@hotmail.com>.

Best,
Kong Janoi

Subject: Eyeglasses
Date: Tue, 27 Jan 2009 18:19:36 -0600
From: Lance@staines-eppling.com
To: walaich@hotmail.com
CC: asiacalling@gmail.com; kongjanoi@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Chaifoo –

Thank you for writing to me.

Yes, I have been trying to reach you since hearing about your work with the hilltribe people at Pang Ma Pha Hospital. My wife (Wimol) and I are members of a Lions Club in Louisiana, USA. We collect used eyeglasses and for the last two years we have donated them in Thailand. I am attaching a report of one of our trips to this email so you can get an idea of our work so far.

In your case, I have something different in mind. I would like to ship a box of unsorted used eyeglasses to you for you to use as you see fit. (The glasses are all tested and marked for the proper prescription, but they are not sorted by prescription in any way.) All we would ask in return is that you send us some photographs to show the eyeglasses are being donated so we can show people back here that the project is working.

To get started, I only need to know that you can use eyeglasses like this, and how many you believe you might need. After that, all I need to do is get a shipping address from you and raise the money to cover the shipping costs.

Thank you again for writing. I hope to hear from you soon.

Lance E. Harwell, Esq.
3500 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 820
Metairie, La 70002
(504)838-0019
(504)838-0043 (fax)

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2009 10:16 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject: RE: Eyeglasses

Dear Mr. Harwell

I apologize for lately answer your e-mail. I wait for the data from my staff. We have 2 target groups who want eyeglasses : the old people and student. But we don't have the detail about their vision level.

In my hospital we don't have ophthalmologist and the people cannot go to see ophthalmologist in provincial hospital. But we can ask ophthalmologist to exam vision level at my hospital ,it take 2-3 months.

Should we know the vision level before you send us the eyeglasses? Or you send us eyeglasses and we distribute them by ourself.

First of all ,I would like to know the number and type of eyeglasses you have. Do you want know anything else ?

Thank you for your kindness
Dr. Walairat chaifoo

Subject: RE: Eyeglasses
Date: Wed, 28 Jan 2009 10:28:42 -0600
From: Lance@staines-eppling.com
To: walaich@hotmail.com

Dr. Walairat –

I am very pleased to hear from you. Thank you for taking the time to write back to me.

In the case of your hospital, I was thinking that we may just ship a box of 100 eyeglasses to you. Your patients can try on different pairs until they find a pair that works. This is something that has been done in other locations where an ophthalmologist is not available. In such a case, it would not be necessary for you to know the vision level before we send the glasses to you.

People here donate their used eyeglasses when the glasses no longer work for them. Most of the glasses are clearly used, but in good condition. The lions then check the donated glasses and put them into unsorted boxes. There is no way of predicting what glasses will be in a particular box.

I was thinking that we could send a box to you and when you get close to running out you could let us know and we could try to send another box. Do you think this could work?

Lance E. Harwell, Esq.
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Metairie, La 70002
(504)838-0019
(504)838-0043 (fax)

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 9:49 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject: RE: Eyeglasses

Dear Mr.Harwell

I think your recommendation is work but I will talk with my staff and ophthalmologist. I think the old people can try the eyeglasses.

For the children ,I'm not sure. Anyway I will tell you later after I prepare our method to distribute eyeglasses.

If you want to know about our hospital and situation, we have our website www.pangmapha.com

Thank you very much
Walairat

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2009 6:36 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject: RE: Eyeglasses

Dear Mr.Harwell

I talked to my staff. We think we can manage eyeglasses as your recommend for old people. We have about 200 - 300 people who want the eyeglasses.

Anyway don't worry about the number, you could send eyeglasses as you can. I think for the first time 100 eyeglasses that you told me last time, it's OK. And after that we will evaluate again.

Thank you very much
Dr.Walairat

From: Lance Harwell
Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2009 11:42 AM
To: walairat chaifoo
Subject: Re: Eyeglasses

Dear Doctor -

We are very pleased to hear from you again. We are hopeful for the success of this project and that we may be of some use I'm your work with hilltribe people in the hospital there.

I will get to work on getting the glasses and on raising the money for shipping. Please send me the best address to ship to. I will send an email to you when the glasses are shipped. Once they arrive we will ask you to send us photos of yourself and some of the people there who benefit from the glasses.

Thank you again for writing.

Lance

From: Lance Harwell
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2009 9:22 AM
To: Dr. Walairat Chaifoo
Subject: New Orleans Eyeglasses Donation

Dr. Chaifoo -

Thank you for speaking to my wife, Wimol, last night to confirm the correct shipping address for Pangmapha Hospital. We shipped one box of one hundred donated eyeglasses to you this morning. We have experienced some problems with Thai Customs in the past, so if you do not receive our package in the next two weeks please let us know and we will attempt to locate it.

We hope this will be a successful project for you and your patients. Please let us know how it goes.

Thanks

Lance

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2009 11:52 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject: RE: New Orleans Eyeglasses Donation

Dear Mr. Harwell

I would like to thank you again. I hope this project is useful for our patient very much. I try to distribute the glasses to the proper patient as well as we can.

Thank you
Walairat

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2009 11:44 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject:

Dear Mr.Harwell

I already got the eyeglasses yesterday. I will distribute next week and send you photographs later. I'm not sure , how long does it take? Anyway we try as fast as we can.

Thank you very much
Walairat

Subject: Lions eyeglasses
Date: Mon, 11 May 2009 13:29:58 -0500
From: Lance@staines-eppling.com
To: walaich@hotmail.com

Dr. Chaifoo –

I hope this message finds you well.

I write to follow-up on our used eyeglasses donation program. Your last email mentioned that you had received our glasses. Have you identified any recipients yet? Please send me a short note at you convenience and let me know how things are going.

Lance E. Harwell, Esq.
3500 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 820
Metairie, La 70002
(504)838-0019
(504)838-0043 (fax)

From: walairat chaifoo [mailto:walaich@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2009 6:55 AM
To: Lance Harwell
Subject: RE: Lions eyeglasses

Dear Mr.Harwell

I plan to tell you about the glasses tomorrow and send the photograph to you. We distribute the glasses more than 80%. The people here are happy with glasses they got and say thank you to you. We just distributed for 4 villages(we have 38 villages). It is easy to distribute and beyond our expectation. Someone who got the glasses is not more than 60 yrs but they can wear glasses fit for their vision. If you have more glasses , please send to us. and I will send the photograph later.

Thank you agian
Walairat