

BOLIVIA: A MISSION WITH VISION

By Darquise Tardif | Optician and Teacher

I've been an optician for nearly 30 years. I started working in clinics during humanitarian missions back in 2003 and I haven't stopped since.

As an opticianry teacher at Cégep Garneau in Quebec City, I get a lot of satisfaction introducing my students to this branch of the profession. I've had the opportunity to organize several internships in Africa and Haiti. I've also gone on twenty or so missions with the NGO Vosh Santa Cruz de Montréal (<https://voshohv.org/>) as well as a few with Terre Sans Frontières (<https://terresansfrontieres.ca/>).

I like to mix business with pleasure. Allow me to explain. Every two years I request deferred leave to go on humanitarian missions. During my last leave I accepted a two-month position working on a project to set up four optical clinics in Bolivia. I loved the experience, and to this day it remains a highlight in my work as an optician and trainer.

For the inhabitants living in the Altiplano villages of Bolivia, eye care is not accessible. They have to travel to the capital, La Paz, which takes several hours. With Terre Sans Frontières and Optométristes Sans Frontières, we brought in equipment to establish four eye examination offices in four different villages. We also installed equipment to shape lenses as well as an inventory of frames, lenses and second-hand glasses that had already been analyzed and categorized.

Optometrists and opticians were recruited to provide on-site, professional service. This project is still in the works, and soon we will have new cooperants joining us on TSF's next mission. If you're interested in getting involved and are excited by the idea of paying it forward, we always need optometrists and opticians willing to share their expertise and, of course, their passion for the job.

You'll never know how fulfilling this kind of volunteer work can be if you haven't done it yourself. So come on, now's your chance!