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**LOCAL OPHTHALMOLOGIST DR. DAVID WHITING
RESTORES SIGHT TO PATIENTS IN MEXICO**

Travels with SEE International Volunteer Humanitarian Team

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., February 22, 2008 – Surgical Eye Expeditions (SEE) International today announced that David Whiting, M.D. an ophthalmologist based in Wayzata, Minnesota, has successfully helped to restore sight to 65 patients, blinded by cataracts, in Mexico.

As part of an international team of volunteer eye surgeons, Dr. Whiting performed cataract surgeries in a free clinic in San Blas, Mexico, in November 2007. Coordinated by the humanitarian medical organization SEE International, the four-day free eye clinic was hosted by ophthalmologist Richard Villasenor, M.D. Other team members included Robert Miller, M.D., Jeff Rutgard, M.D., and Jonathan Perlman, M.D.

Cataracts, the clouding of the eye lens, can eventually lead to blindness if left untreated. According to the World Health Organization, cataracts account for almost half of the world's 37 million cases of blindness.

“The highlight of the trip was seeing the crowd of people awaiting our arrival in the early evening,” described Dr. Whiting. “It was clear that our services were needed and that we would have an opportunity to give life-changing care to a wide range of people, both young and old. I was surprised by the severity of eye disease among some of the young adults--effectively blinded by reversible eye diseases, but unable to find care until we made it available to them. Knowing that we were able to restore sight to these people, and free them and their caregivers from the dependence of being or caring for the blind was gratifying”

“This eye clinic represents the true spirit of international cooperation and humanitarian aid,” said Kim Krajewski, SEE International general manager. “With a 30-minute cataract operation, a person's sight and life is restored. Not only is the patient's life transformed, but the entire community benefits, starting with the immediate caretaker who can now return to work or school.”

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Restoring Sight and Restoring Lives

San Blas is a small fishing village of about 12,000 people on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, located between Puerto Vallarta and Matzatan. The SEE International eye clinic was held in conjunction with a multi-specialty medical clinic, sponsored by Liga International, which recurs twice a year.

“I was particularly touched by two young moms who had small, premature babies needing eye exams to assess for retinal abnormalities associated with their prematurity,” said Dr. Whiting. “One was entirely healthy and the other had untreatable eye trouble, indicating a life of complete blindness for the child. It was a heart-wrenching task to have to share the good news with one mom and the tragic news with the other, knowing what it would mean for the mother and child to bear this burden.”

In addition to the humanitarian aspect of his first surgical expedition, professional development was another rewarding experience for Dr. Whiting. “The passion and enthusiasm of the volunteers—from pilots to medical students to physicians—was beyond my expectations. Teaching some of the medical students eager to learn how to care for these people was another highlight, as well as having the professional camaraderie of three other doctors performing simultaneous surgery at my side. I also had the opportunity to use a suture-less surgical technique that is ideal for advanced cataracts common in developing countries. The specialized surgical course I had taken recently at SEE International was a great help to me.”

Dr. Whiting plans to return to San Blas in May to volunteer his surgical services again.

Dr. Whiting earned a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree from Stanford University. He received his medical degree from Washington University School of Medicine, in St. Louis, Missouri. He practices ophthalmology at Consultative Eye Care in Wayzata and Joffe MediCenter in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

SEE International’s Work In Mexico and Around the World

SEE International is committed to helping restore sight in Mexico. In 2008, SEE has planned 18 free eye clinics in Mexico in the cities of Celaya, Ensenada, Mante, Tecate, Tijuana and San Blas. According to the Pan American Health Organization, 29% of the disabled population in Mexico are blind or perceive only shadows.

SEE International is a pioneer in the fight against global blindness. According to the World Health Organization, every five seconds someone in the world goes blind. Last year, SEE International performed sight-restoring eye surgeries for 9,000 people in 33 countries.

In addition to direct surgical interventions, SEE International helps train U.S.-based ophthalmologists in specialized surgical techniques that are appropriate and effective in developing countries. SEE International also promotes skills exchanges between host and visiting ophthalmologists.

About SEE International

SEE International is a humanitarian nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring sight to disadvantaged blind individuals worldwide through medical, surgical, and educational services. Founded in 1974, SEE International has screened more than 1 million individuals and restored sight to 330,000 patients. More than 600 eye surgeons from 75 countries belong to SEE International’s global network of volunteers. For more information, visit www.seeintl.org.

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