

# Eagle Scout service projects to help The Hope Alliance & CHOICE provide eyeglasses to people in underdeveloped countries.

## Benefits:

1. Projects will help some of the world's poorest people see clearly for the first time.
2. Children can be given an opportunity to succeed in school
3. Eyeglasses can make it possible for visually impaired to be employed
4. Costs are minimal to the scout and other participants.
5. Project is open-ended so required hours for the project can be readily fulfilled.
6. Ample information is available from humanitarian association websites, and also in hardcopy form available through the Criddles, for a prospective Eagle Scout to justify and write-up an Eagle project for review by the local board. Scouts should remember that this paper-work may require a few weeks to get through their leadership groups.

## What can be done for an Eagle Scout Project

1. Set up eyeglass collection drives.
2. Prepare suitcases for organizing, transporting and distributing glasses.
3. Participate in measuring prescriptions of donated eyeglasses.
4. Participate in computer data entry of eyeglass prescription information.
5. Organize drive to fund purchase of needed eye clinic equipment.

An Eagle Scout project may focus on any one or more of these five categories. We do expect the scout to be familiar with and competent to discuss all aspects of the eyeglass program.

## SETTING UP AN EYEGLASS DRIVE for The Hope Alliance - CHOICE

1. For details, contact JoAn or Richard Criddle, phone number 435-713-4334 or by email [rscridle@hotmail.com](mailto:rscridle@hotmail.com)
2. Make arrangements with your school, church, neighborhood, workplace, mall, etc., to hold an eyeglass drive.
3. Set a date and advertise the event in every way open to you.
4. Provide clearly marked boxes or bins and place them in prominent places.
5. FOLLOW UP IS ESSENTIAL– **After the drive**, thank people for participating and let them know about the success of the drive.
6. If you also plan to have groups help sort and clean the glasses, make those arrangements as well, after consulting with Criddles.
7. Then arrange with Criddles regarding how you plan to transfer the glasses to them.

### A WIN-WIN GIFT

Many people in the United States do not realize that there is a need for used eyeglasses, so educating them is helpful. Once people understand that there is a need, and that it costs them nothing but to give old eyeglasses that they no longer use, most are delighted to donate.

### THE NEED FOR USED EYEGLASSES

Eyeglasses are expensive, but once a person needs a new prescription, they usually keep the old pair of glasses in case their new pair breaks. Other than that, there is no use for used prescription eyeglasses anywhere in the United States. Even poor people in this country are able to have new glasses made to their specific prescription. However, in developing nations this is not the case. If they had to pay for eyeglasses, poor people in these countries would never be able to afford a pair, no matter how bad their eyesight got.

### DONATING EYEGLASSES

This is where the donation of used prescription eyeglasses by people in America and other advanced nations can make a huge difference for poor people in the world. Used eyeglasses can be donated in several ways. For instance, most optometrist shops accept old eyeglasses, and service organizations such as Lions Clubs occasionally have drives to collect glasses. One of the best ways, however, is for an individual or a group to have a special drive. For example, Eagle Scout candidates sometimes choose to organize an Eagle Project to collect, clean and sort used eyeglasses, and/or large, used 'Samsonite' type, hard-sided suitcases. Employees sometimes ask for glasses and suitcases from their colleagues at work, and quite often one or more students organize drives in their schools or communities.

### ALL KINDS OF EYEGLASSES AND EYEGLASS PRODUCTS ARE NEEDED

All types of glasses can benefit the poor, so although drives set out specifically to collect used prescription eyeglasses, other types of glasses are needed as well. These include sun glasses (both prescription and non-prescription), reading glasses, safety glasses and sports glasses. Even many glasses with broken frames or missing nose pieces can be repaired with the parts we have on hand. Sun glasses are particularly needed by those who live in tropical parts of the world or where the glare from water or snow is a problem. Most poor people in developing nations spend most of their time outdoors, so protection from the sun in the form of sunglasses and hats can make a huge difference in saving their eyesight. In addition to eyeglasses, the following can be collected as well: eyeglass cases, lens cloths, and straps that go around the neck to keep glasses from falling off. Even ball caps are useful. Large, hard-sided suitcases are always in demand because 20-25 are needed per clinic.

### OTHER SOURCES OF EYEGLASSES

Sometimes makers of sun glasses are willing to donate their seconds or overruns. These brand-new glasses are often of high quality and are greatly needed. Sometimes, thoughtful individuals will buy new reading glasses or sun glasses just to donate.

### **PREPARATION OF EYEGLASSES FOR DISTRIBUTION**

Once eyeglasses have been collected, they need to be washed, sorted into categories, and repaired if necessary. Volunteers then use a machine called a lensometer to read the prescription of each pair of prescription glasses, they write down the prescription and put it and the glasses in a numbered zip-lock plastic bag. The prescription and bag number are entered into a computer program to form a database of about 4000 to 5000 randomly selected prescription eyeglasses for each clinic. (With this many glasses, most people can be fitted with glasses that match or closely match their eye needs.) Donated glasses are taken by volunteers trained to run an eyeglass clinic to a poor community in a developing nation. The glasses are transported in and distributed from the large, hard-sided suitcases that have been padded and customized with a grid that holds the glasses upright in their numbered sequence. Such portable clinics can be set up in less than an hour and readily moved to new villages as needed. These, volunteer-run clinics usually last for a few days in any given location, and are repeated in that location 2-3 times a year. . After each clinic, the suitcases w/glasses are stored until volunteers again come to staff a clinic, and bring replacement glasses for the 1000-1500 glasses distributed in a typical clinic.

### **EYEGLASS CLINICS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS**

The Hope Alliance – CHOICE will run eyeglass clinics in developing nations several times each year. Under their auspices, volunteers are trained to use a retinomax machine that can read a person's eye prescription in a matter of seconds. With a printout of the prescription, the client moves through the various stations at the clinic where volunteers on our team search the computer database for available glasses in our collection that match their need. 3-5 pair that match (or closely match) a person's eye needs are selected. Clients try on the glasses for the pair that best meets their need and these are fitted to their face. If needed, they are also given sunglasses and/or reading glasses. With multiple stations, clients move through the clinic at the rate of about one person every two minutes.

### **CLINIC VOLUNTEERS**

People who qualify to go as volunteers to one of The Hope Alliance – CHOICE eyeglass or other clinics or building projects, will be away from home about 10-14 days. A typical expedition costs them ~ \$2000-\$3000 per person. This will include transportation, housing, most meals, and perhaps a side trip to tourist sites such as Tikal in Guatemala or Machu Picchu in Peru. The trip cost is tax deductible, your experience priceless!

## **Collect and prepare cases for organizing, transporting and distributing glasses**

Though at first it may seem strange, our eyeglass clinics are run directly out of suitcases. As part of an Eagle Scout project Young men can collect suitcases and construct partitions for organizing and transport of the glasses. The suitcases required are the large, hard-sided, "Sampsonite-type" cases that many people have stored in their basements, attics, or closets and never use anymore. Many people are happy to donate these to get them out of their house. Smaller cases won't work because of limitations on the number of bags that can be transported. We need bags that will hold many glasses. Soft-sided bags are not usable because of airline baggage handling practices. Details on suitcase bag sizes and construction of partitions can be obtained from Criddles at 435-713-4334.

Partitions must be constructed using rigid, light-weight materials. We have found honeycombed plastic sign-board materials to be the optimum building material. However, Eagle Scout candidates may use their ingenuity to come up with something better. The sign board material is obtained from the scrap bins of local sign production companies. Companies are very willing to donate these materials. We would like to have an Eagle Scout prepare enough glasses for a new clinic, i.e. about 15 cases.

Once eyeglasses have been collected, cleaned, sorted, measured to determine prescriptions, bagged with prescription and item number, and entered into a computer database, they are filed into partitioned suitcases. Each case can contain about 350 pair of glasses standing on end in bags with numbers showing. Fifteen cases can hold about 5,000 pair of glasses, the number needed for a clinic. The loaded suitcases are transported to a clinic site, opened, and are then immediately ready for dispensing glasses to those in need. When patient prescription needs are determined in the clinic, a computer search of the database identifies the correct number of needed glasses. Then workers go to the suitcases, select the correct pair of glasses, fit them to patients, and watch them walk out the clinic door with a new view of the world. The empty, numbered bags from dispensed glasses are taken back to the US and other pairs of glasses are assigned the necessary numbers to again complete the collection.

When the clinic is finished, the cases are closed and stored locally for use at the next scheduled clinic. The replacement glasses are returned to the clinic site with the next group of volunteers. They are filed in the suitcases, and the clinic is again ready for operation within a few minutes.

## **Measuring prescriptions of donated eyeglasses**

Prescriptions are measured with a lensometer. Eagle Scout candidates can organize the washing and sorting of collected glasses and measuring prescriptions. The measurements require attention to detail to ensure accuracy, but can readily be done by young men

following a short training period. The equipment needed for these measurements is rather expensive. Scouts living in the vicinity of the Hope Alliance headquarters or those living in or near Cache Valley Utah can arrange to use Hope Alliance equipment. Alternatively, the prospective Eagle Scout may be able to arrange evening or holiday use of lensometer equipment belonging to their local optometrist. Many are willing to assist in training scouts and supervising this effort.

For this portion of the project, the scout will have to prepare number labels attach these to zip-loc bags and also prepare forms for entering the prescriptions, unless the supervising optometrist has a lensometer that prints out prescriptions. The numbered bags must be maintained in order for later entry of the data into a computer database. As part of an Eagle Scout project, we would expect the scout to organize and supervise coworkers in measurements of several hundred pair of glasses.

## Computer data entry of eyeglass prescription information

Eyeglass prescription information is maintained in Excel databases. Scouts wishing to help with data entry should have some prior exposure to use of databases, however data entry is straightforward. The process simply requires entering prescription information into appropriate columns in the database. Data entry can be done on any windows based operating system either at the scout's home, at the Criddles, or at The Hope Alliance. The Eagle Scout project director will have to arrange pick-up and delivery of glasses and prescription information and the program for data entry. Most scouts are quite adept at data entry and can enter about 100 prescriptions in an hour once they are up and going.

## Organize drive to fund purchase of needed eye clinic equipment

The Hope Alliance - CHOICE eyeglass projects need additional equipment for measuring used eyeglass prescriptions and measuring patient's eyes. If a prospective eagle scout can gain approval of a suitable project to raise money for these items, it would be a great benefit to the program. There are strict scouting requirements on projects to raise funds for projects like this. Check with local scouting leaders before embarking on such a project.