

# NEXUS

Volume 22 Issue 1  
SPRING/ SUMMER 2018



*Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference*

*The Yayasan John Fawcett Indonesia Foundation has been our partner in two Eyesight projects, one in Bali and last year on the Island of Lombok. What John Fawcett achieved through his Foundation has positively affected the lives of well over a million people. Widely known in Bali as Dr. John, his assistance to those in less fortunate circumstances has earned him the love and respect of the Balinese population and those in government circles. Sadly, the founder, John Fawcett passed away on September 9, 2017. The team in Bali, the Board in Australia, and the Trustees in the United Kingdom, are committed to continue John's work and will carry with them the strong memory of his inspiration and dedication.*

## BALI EYE CARE

By Margaret Bennett



**The mobile eye hospital surgical van.**

Our son Gordon introduced my husband and me to the John Fawcett Foundation (JFF) in Bali, Indonesia. Gordon had first travelled to Bali in 2004 when, during a leave from his deployment with the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, he arranged to meet his wife and baby daughter there. En route to Denpasar, he perused the in-flight reading material on the Garuda Airlines flight, and read an article about the foundation. The address, he noticed, was in Sanur, not far from his hotel. He asked his taxi driver if he had heard of the organization and discovered that it was well known and highly respected.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Bali Eye Care .....	1
Al Gerwing Legacy Art Auction .....	3
Abigail Jimenez .....	4
Seeking Board Members .....	5
ROHFC to Build School in Nepal .....	6

During his stay there, he visited the offices of the JFF and met John Fawcett, who explained the purpose of the foundation: to eliminate avoidable blindness in Indonesia, largely caused by cataracts. Gordon was so impressed he left a donation and promised to keep in touch, returning in 2008.

Gordon and his wife, Karen, having added two more children to the family, and accompanied by Karen's parents, again visited Bali in 2011. We joined them for the last three weeks of their stay, and asked Gordon to introduce us to 80-year-old John Fawcett, of whom he has spoken so highly.

We spent a morning at the foundation's compound, visiting with John, an Australian, who described the near-death experience that led him to establish the charitable organization to assist the Balinese people whom he had come to love.

John showed us the thick book of names and

We saw a photo of a little boy who had fallen into fire and been severely burned. At the hospital, his arms had been wrapped to his sides, where they had permanently grown. He couldn't breathe properly because his chest couldn't expand. Foundation doctors freed his arms, and he was provided with monkey bars to exercise with, providing his own physiotherapy in a country where rehabilitation facilities don't exist.

A young woman, who had lost an eye due to an accident with acid, was fitted with a prosthetic eye. Unable to marry because of superstition regarding the loss of her eye, she had been given a brighter and more secure future.

While we were there, a 7-year-old girl who had never seen was led into the office, eyes bandaged; having had cataracts removed the previous day. Normally, the surgery must be done before a child



addresses of the many people who had been assisted by the sight-restoring cataract surgery, currently numbering over 50,000. He explained the causes of cataracts, found even in infants: genetics, diseases such as diabetes, damage due to accidents, daylight, diet, and dehydration—the six Ds. On one office wall, were dozens of photos of people who had recently received the free surgery to remove cataracts. There were also numerous before and after photos of children born with cleft palates. Thanks to the free surgery, they could now live normal lives where once they had been hidden away in their jungle homes with parents who felt ashamed, or cursed by the gods.

turns two, by which time the connections between the eye and the brain have been established. At seven, the success of the surgery was questionable. The doctor removed the bandages, and she peered at a pink-haired doll on her lap. When one of the technicians asked if she could see, she shyly whispered “yes.” He put sunglasses on her and escorted her into the courtyard to meet her mother.

John showed us photos of another little girl who, after successful cataract surgery, had run across the courtyard to her mother, whom she was seeing for the first time.

“Can you imagine how that would feel,” queried John, “to be able to run for the first time because you can now see where you’re going?”

Lastly, we gowned up to witness an operation being performed in the compound, in one of the five mobile units, “buses,” which travel to remote areas to perform eye exams, donate prescription glasses and eye drops, and provide the cataract surgery on the spot. Outside the bus, a row of patients nervously waited on plastic chairs, gowned in blue, for their 20-



**Patients after surgery**

minute operations performed by an Indonesian physician. (Foreign physicians are not allowed to practice in Indonesia, but volunteer their time to train local doctors.) We stood at the back of the tiny operating theatre, watching on the closed circuit TV while the doctor, assisted by two nurses, removed a cataract from a woman’s eye, and placed it on a bandage so we could see what it looked like: a dime-sized, yellowish, thick tissue. A new lens was inserted into the patient’s eye, and a bandage was placed over it. Once the operation was completed,

she was led shakily down the steps to a bench in the shade and the next patient was escorted up the steps.

Only one cataract is removed for each patient, so that twice as many people can have sight restored. The cost for each adult is about \$65. For children the surgery is more expensive because the operations must be done in hospitals under general anesthetic. Corrective surgery for cleft palates has also been provided for more than 200 children, giving them a life free from social stigma. At more than \$500 per



**Bandages removed and sight restored.**

operation, Balinese families could never afford this life-changing procedure.

We too were so impressed with the work of the John Fawcett Foundation that we left a donation and promised to find a way to raise funds in Canada. Once home, we set about to find an organization that would partner with us, and after some searching, found the Rainbow of Hope for Children and George Bunz, its president. We are very grateful for their interest in this worthwhile charity, which has changed tens of thousands of lives in Indonesia.

### **AL GERWING LEGACY ART AUCTION**

In 2017 some of Al Gerwing’s family members wanted to do something special in remembrance of Al’s passing on Nov 9, 2007. Helen Berscheid, a niece, came up with the idea of an art auction. She knew that there were many in the family who were exceptional artists who would support such a commemoration. Thus was born the Al Gerwing Legacy Art Auction.

Many contributed a wide variety of very fine creations to the auction. The auction was designed to award the items on the day of Al’s passing on November 9th. There was great support for the auction and the proceeds were designated to the Alphonse Gerwing Charitable Foundation.

# ABIGAIL JIMENEZ - PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

by Joe Gubbels

Abigail Jimenez Acevedo participated in a 29-day (December 23, 2017 to January 20, 2018) Public Engagement program in Canada, which was offered by Rainbow of Hope for Children Society. The goal of a Public Engagement program is to offer an opportunity for individuals in developing countries to experience another way of life, culture, and work habits. It provides a chance to learn from other people by sharing ideas and different viewpoints. It also provides an opportunity to identify possible strategies to improve education systems and develop new programs that can be adopted in their own country.



**Serving Buns & Chocolate**



**Helping Santa**



**Organizing Earthquake Drill**

Abigail is the mathematics instructor at the Public Education COMPLEX “Tony Gubbels”, which is located in Chincha Baja, a rural, agricultural region on the coast of Peru. The COMPLEX was built by Rainbow of Hope for Children Society, inaugurated on May 15, 2010 and offers Literacy, Primary, Secondary and 6 technical programs for adults. During the seven years at the COMPLEX, Abigail has provided unwavering dedication, not only teaching mathematics, but also initiating and participating in many associated academic activities and development projects organized by Amigos de Siempre, the local nongovernmental organization.



**Amiskwaciy Academy**



**Wainwright Rotary**



**Alberta Community Initiatives**

The Public Engagement program presented an occasion for Abigail to thank the Canadian people for their contributions to the projects that they support in Peru. In addition it provides an opportunity to witness that donations are raised by the work of volunteers through fund raising activities and that the donors share their wealth to assist those who lack the necessities of life.

During the 29 days of public engagement in Canada, Abigail experienced and observed many things that surprised her. In her report, she noted the following: walking on snowshoes; riding on a snowmobile; ice fishing; colleges and a university operations; activities of three Rotary International Clubs; snow, cold weather (-51 in Grande Prairie); continuous rain in Vancouver; mountains and big trees; respect for traffic signs and pedestrians; huge houses with garages, trees and gardens; long trains; diversity of people; First Nation’s culture; sumptuous meals (ate for the rest of

her life); safety and security from assaults and robbery; people taking care of their health with exercise and vitamins; hot water showers; and taking off shoes to enter a home.



**Snowshoeing**



**Snowmobiling**



**Ice fishing**

Abigail concluded her report with the following statement: The people (translation from Spanish) “took care of me at all times, as part of a family. People really impressed me, because with all of them, they gave me some of their time, their patience, their understanding, their attention, their energy, their kindness. I will never forget them and they will be in my heart forever.”



**Weather -51 Grande Prairie**



**UBC Museum of Anthropology**



**Rotary Strathcona Edmonton**

Abigail returned home to Peru with many stories for her husband, two children, friends, and her colleagues at the COMPLEX. She is anticipating the beginning of the next academic year in March 2018 when she can propose and implement many innovative ideas that she learned in Canada.

**ଉତ୍ତର ଉତ୍ତର SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS ଉତ୍ତର ଉତ୍ତର**

Rainbow of Hope for Children Society elects board members at its annual meetings. If you are interested in letting your name stand for election, please contact our president, Charles Matt at [rohfc@outlook.com](mailto:rohfc@outlook.com) or phone 306-242-2484.

This is a great opportunity to get involved with a small and completely voluntary organization that does great work in Central and South America, and parts of Asia and Africa. Your responsibilities as a board member are to see that the funds donated to our projects are used responsibly and that administration costs are kept to a minimum.

You will need to read project proposals and learn about our current work. We usually meet three times a year in Edmonton or Wainwright and have occasional teleconferences. You may be interested in working to develop and fund raise for projects in areas where you have a special interest or just in being a supportive part of a small international development organization. There are opportunities to travel with small groups on monitoring trips to the projects, although these are not funded by the organization because we choose to put most of our funds directly into our work. We're a great group of people, consider joining us.

# ROHFC TO BUILD SCHOOL IN NEPAL

by Deacon Pat Hessel, Board of Directors



Map of Nepal, high-lighting the Rasuwa District

In April of 2015, a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal. Only 17 days later, the same area was struck with a 7.3 magnitude earthquake. Nearly 9,000 people lost their lives and over 22,000 were injured. More than a half million homes were destroyed and nearly 300,000 additional homes were damaged.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia. It is a landlocked country bordered by China on the north and India to the south, west, and east. Many of its 31.5 million people survive on subsistence farming, including crops and livestock. Tourism, especially related to trekking in the Himalayas, is also important to the economy of Nepal.

The Rasuwa District is a rural, mountainous area in north-central Nepal (see map). Rasuwa was between the epicentres of the two major earthquakes. Even before the earthquakes, Rasuwa had the lowest Human Development Index figures in the country, reflecting their poverty, low quality of life, and need for development support. Agricultural activities were dramatically affected by the earthquakes. Many animals were killed and the surviving animals often had to share accommodation with their owners, as their shelters were also damaged. In this mountainous region, many of the crops are grown in terraced fields, and many of these fields were destroyed by the earthquakes.

During a recent visit, I stayed with a family that had a very simple home built into the side of a mountain. The family lived on a single floor and their animals were kept below the living quarters. The earthquake demolished the living quarters and the family was forced into the area that had been occupied by the animals. Tin sheeting was used to enclose the new living area. Some of the animals were

sheltered in an improvised lean-to while others wandered in and out of the “living quarters.” It was necessary to keep the animal feed (corn) in the living quarters, and rats could be heard scurrying between the piles of corn throughout the night.

Eighty-seven schools in the Rasuwa District were damaged in the earthquakes. The government continues to provide teachers for the schools, but instruction is typically taking place in hastily constructed temporary classrooms. Many students have simply not returned to school. The government has no plans for rebuilding the schools. One school in the Rasuwa District (Ghormu Village) is currently being rebuilt, and a high school (in Jibajibe Village) is being reconstructed with private funding from Canadian donors.

Rainbow of Hope for Children has undertaken a



Suryodaya School after the earthquake

project to rebuild an elementary school in Suryodaya. This community in the Rasuwa District is a one-hour trek down the mountain from Jibajibe Village (the nearest

“large” community). While Jibajibe has fairly reliable road access year-round, the road to Suryodaya typically washes away during the annual monsoons. The monsoons occur from June through September.

The school building in Suryodaya was very badly affected by the earthquake. The community constructed a Temporary Learning Center (TLC) after the earthquake to allow the local children to continue their schooling, although the TLC suffered extensive storm damage in the last monsoon (2017).

An “UNSAFE” sticker was placed by the government investigation team at the Suryodaya school after the earthquake. The students have reluctantly moved back to the earthquake-damaged schoolrooms, this being their only option. This school has received no offer of support to date and has students totaling 38; half of them are girls.

The new school will be built in cooperation with the High Himalayan Community Project (HHCP). This is a volunteer organization based in the Rasuwa District (see their website: [www.hhcupn.org](http://www.hhcupn.org)). Their current programs include sponsorship of individual schoolchildren, provision of pigs and goats to families, provision of greenhouses for families, a micro savings/loan program, and a program to fabricate and distribute reusable menstrual pads for high school students (allowing many young girls to remain in school). You are invited to learn

more about each of these projects on their website. HHCP is 100% voluntary. Mr. Harikrishna Devkota, the founder and CEO, runs a trekking business and draws no salary from HHCP. The trekking business covers all administrative expenses. All of the funds raised by HHCP (100%) are used directly for the projects, including the construction of the school in Suryodaya.

HHCP believes strongly in community involvement in all of these projects. There has been extensive consultation with the people in Suryodaya, and a School Project Management Committee has been formed. The school will comprise five classrooms. The total budget is \$48,245 (Can).

These funds have already been raised thanks to the generous contributions of three families from the Edmonton area. The first installment has been sent to Nepal so that construction can begin (and hopefully be completed) before the monsoon season. All of the money raised by Rainbow of Hope for Children will be used for the construction of the school.

Rainbow of Hope for Children is very happy and proud to be involved with this important work, but as

described above, there is still much more work to do in this impoverished, damaged, and nearly forgotten area of the world. We are hopeful that Suryodaya will be the first of many schools supported by Rainbow of Hope for Children. Donations designated for “Nepal Schools” are encouraged and appreciated



**Classrooms are unsafe**



**An “UNSAFE” sticker placed by the government**



**Students work inside the unsafe classroom**

*“If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life.”*

– Author Unknown





**OFFICERS**

*President:* Charles Matt, Saskatoon, SK  
*V-President:* Peter Van Winssen, Wainwright, AB  
*Secretary:* Clara Qualizza, Wildwood, AB  
*Treasurer:* Cherry Dumalagan, Surrey, BC

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

George Bunz, Wainwright, AB  
Joe Gubbels, Edmonton, AB  
Patrick Hessel, Spruce Grove, AB  
Margaret Bennett, Vermillion, AB  
Connie Gerwing, Prince Albert, SK  
Gilles Verret, Edmonton, AB  
Guy Werbecki, Saskatoon, SK  
Theresa Zyp, Spruce Grove, AB

**BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED**  
*Rainbow of Hope for Children Society elects board members at its annual meetings. If you are interested in letting your name stand for election, please contact our president, Charles Matt at [rohfc@outlook.com](mailto:rohfc@outlook.com) or phone 306-242-2484.*

**RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF:**



Global Affairs  
Canada

Affaires mondiales  
Canada



Government of Alberta, CIP - International Development

A special thanks to:  
• Sharon Romanow and her leadership students at Blessed Sacrament School in Wainwright for helping prepare the NEXUS mail out.  
• The Peter Van Winssen Professional Corporation, Wainwright, Alberta for donating the cost of the NEXUS mail-out.

Thank you to all our donors, several Rotary Clubs and Knights of Columbus, Edmonton Community Foundation, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation.

We thank you for offering a gift to one of these projects and are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:  
  
RAINBOW OF HOPE  
WAINWRIGHT, AB T9W 1S7  
PO BOX 2883  
  
Registered Charity No: 889160172-RR0001  
[www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca](http://www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca)  
  
**Donations of securities is a significant tax advantage; to donate shares please contact our Treasurer at [dumalagancherry@gmail.com](mailto:dumalagancherry@gmail.com) or 604-308-7783.**

**Thank you all for your support.**

**PROGRAM OF RAINBOW OF HOPE**

1. Reducing avoidable blindness, Indonesia
2. Casa Ambrosina young women's capacitation, Brazil
3. School of family agriculture, Bahia, Brazil
4. PREDA protecting children, Philippines
5. El Sauce School organic agriculture, El Salvador
6. Nepal Schools, Nepal
7. High school & university scholarships, El Salvador
8. Disaster reconstruction & education, Chinchá Baja, Peru
9. PAMBE Ghana education, nutrition and health
10. Kinyambu Primary School, Kenya
11. Nzavoni Primary School, Kenya
12. Bilingual Bicultural College, Cunen, Guatemala
13. Ussongo Primary School, Tanzania
14. Daughters of Mary Projects, Tanzania
15. Disaster relief fund
16. Undesignated: where most needed

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
September 8 at 1:20 P.M.  
Change for Children's Office  
2nd Floor, 10808-124 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
  
\*\*There are accessibility issues getting to the 2nd floor meeting room. On street parking is available in the area.

NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.