



Faces of Hope

People making a difference on Hopeful Ways Projects

Winter 2026



"We provide medical & humanitarian service and educational opportunities to improve the quality of life for the people of Nicaragua. We do this with great love, compassion, and a sincere desire to be of service to those living in impoverished conditions."

Providing Hope. Enriching Lives.

President's Message:

There are many new happenings to report inside this issue, especially since the last issue was 5 months ago. Here are some of the highlights.

- During 2025, Hopeful Ways coordinated with various Lions Clubs and FONIPREE / Ojo Sano Eye Clinic to deliver 11 cataract screening clinics in 6 communities within Nicaragua.
- The Nicaragua "Gift of Sight" Eye Surgery Program rapidly expanded and helped more than twice as many people with eye surgery during 2025 as during any previous year. 201 people had their eyesight restored and their lives enhanced with cataract surgery. The expansion placed a serious strain on the 2025 budget, but it is difficult to say "No" to restoring someone's eyesight.
- Hofbrauhaus Buffalo hosted a Hopeful Ways fundraiser that generated much-needed funds to support the "Gift of Sight" Nicaragua Eye Surgery Program.
- A second Eye Care Mission went to Nicoya, Costa Rica, in January 2026. The mission was a resounding success and provided free eye care services to almost 800 people, with over 500 of these people also receiving custom-made prescription eyeglasses. Additionally, abnormal eye conditions were identified in 127 people, who were referred to the hospital ophthalmologist for follow-up care.
- Hopeful Ways has requests for future eye care missions in multiple locations in both Costa Rica and Guatemala. These requests are under evaluation.

As you can see, there is much happening and no shortage of work for Hopeful Ways volunteers. Many hands make for lighter work. More volunteers are always welcome. All you need is a willingness to help others. You don't need any special skills, have to live in Western NY, or travel on a mission to help people. If you have a little free time or maybe want to become more heavily involved, please contact me to discuss the various opportunities. Hopeful Ways has something to match everyone's skills and/or interests.

Always in service, Jim Carlins, President, 716-909-8942, jjcarlins@hopefulways.org

“Gift of Sight” Breaks All-Time Record

The **Hopeful Ways “Gift of Sight” Program** experienced a tremendous surge of eye surgeries during 2025. The previous annual record of 100 eye surgeries set during 2024 was more than doubled, with **201 eye surgeries being performed during 2025.**

The increase was the result of additional requests for services from past and new communities. Hopeful Ways also expanded its geographic coverage into the more remote Bluefields region on the eastern Atlantic coast.

CATARACTS are the leading cause of **CURABLE BLINDNESS** in the world!

In short, 2025 successes include:

- 11 Free eye care clinics in 6 Nicaraguan communities
- 201 Free sight-restoring cataract surgeries for deserving people



Some of these people have been nearly blind for over a decade and require assistance during daily living. Restoring their eyesight enriched their lives so that they could once again live independently. They would no longer be a burden to their families and could become productive members of their community. The need is great, and saying “No” is difficult when you can restore someone's eyesight.

The Hopeful Ways **“Gift of Sight”** Program delivers **HOPE** and **ENRICHES** people's lives.

The only downside is the significant negative impact of the unscheduled doubling of the eye surgeries on the annual budget. The Hopeful Ways Gift of Sight Program delivers an **Eyesight Restoring Cataract Surgery for about \$220 per person.** That's an additional \$22,000 impact on the budget for the extra 100 surgeries. As an all-volunteer organization, 100% of tax-deductible donations directly provide services for needy people. Consider sponsoring someone to have their eyesight restored. **They need and appreciate your support!**

Every dollar helps! No gift is too small. Give someone the “Gift of Sight”.

Sponsor CURABLE BLINDNESS for a Needy Person			
Each \$200 Sponsors a Sight Restoring Cataract Surgery		Mail checks to: Hopeful Ways	
Amount	\$ _____	Any Amount Helps	PO Box 1037 Getzville NY 14068
Name:	_____		Donate by Credit Card to:
Address:	_____		“Gift of Sight” Eye Surgeries
Email:	_____		or: www.hopefulways.org
Phone:	_____		Note: Contact information is only used if questions arise.

Donate by credit card: <https://hopefulways.org/hopeful-ways-donate/> and select **“Gift of Sight”**

Bluefields Receives a Cataract Screening Clinic

The port city of Bluefields is the capital of Nicaragua's South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region. It is known for its unique Creole culture, diverse ethnic mix, and colorful history as a pirate haven and British protectorate.

Until recent years, the region was not easily accessible from western Nicaragua by land due to the many interspersed rivers and streams. Also, there are no local ophthalmologists in Bluefields to serve the many very poor and needy people.

Hopeful Ways supported a joint effort by FONIPRECE / Ojo Sano Clinic and multiple Nicaraguan Lions Clubs to deliver a cataract screening clinic to Bluefields. The travel time and distance to Bluefields made this clinic a more expensive endeavor. However, the services delivered to these people made the clinic very worthwhile and beneficial.

The results included 230 patients receiving free eye care, with 35 patients identified with severe cataracts qualifying them for free cataract surgery through the Hopeful Ways "Gift of Sight" Program to restore their sight. Additionally, 84 people received eyeglass prescriptions through refractive exams, and 41 prescription eyeglasses were ordered.



"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, to all the people you can, in all the places you can, as long as ever you can."

— John Wesley

PATIENT STORY: GUILLERMO HODGON

Age: 77 years old Gender: Male

November 20, 2025

How long have you had vision problems?

For several years, I had been losing my vision until I became almost completely blind. I couldn't see well enough to go out to the fields to work, and everyday life became very difficult.

How did the vision problem affect your life (income and ability to work/go to school, social life, family life)?

Because of my blindness, I could no longer work in the fields to earn my living. I am not a pensioner, and because my children are unemployed, I had no one to depend on. I lived with great sadness and helplessness, unable to take care of myself or contribute to my household.

How did surgery change your life and/or the lives of your family members?

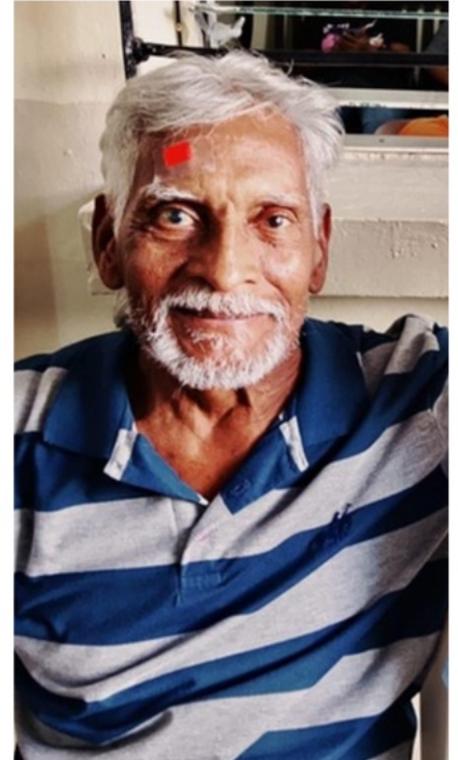
The surgery changed my life completely. Thanks to the social program that provided the cataract surgery free of charge, I can now see again. I can move around safely, do my chores, and live with independence. I feel full of joy and hope again.

What does receiving this surgery mean to you?

Receiving this surgery means everything to me. I never would have been able to afford it on my own. It is a blessing and a miracle in my life, for which I am deeply grateful to God and to those who made it possible.

What does sight mean to you?

Sight means freedom, dignity, and life. It allows me to live without depending on others, enjoy the world around me, and thank God every day for giving me back my vision.



Our Values

Humility

Outreach

Passion

Enthusiasm



Eye Care Volunteers Deliver Essential Services

Some Americans view Costa Rica as a vacation and retirement destination. While this may be true in some beach and resort locations, the rural Costa Rican communities paint a different picture with people who lack essential life services.

The Hopeful Ways 21-person Eye Care Mission Team conducted a 5-day Eye Care Clinic in cooperation with dozens of Nicoya Lions and Hospital La Anexión staff during January 26 - 30, 2026. The clinic provided free eye care services to 790 patients, which significantly reduced the 3 year long, 3,200 person eye exam waiting list.



Eyeglasses were specified by Hopeful Ways opticians for fabrication by the hospital.

The free eye care services included: visual acuity test, intraocular pressure (IOP) test, and refraction. The patient could receive an eyeglass prescription from the optometrist. 344 patients were identified with potential abnormal conditions. For these patients, the Hopeful Ways ophthalmologist provided a more detailed diagnostic examination. For 127 patients, this examination resulted in a diagnosis that required a referral for follow-up by the hospital ophthalmologist.



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Braving One Storm at a Time

As the Eastern United States braced itself for the icy grip of Winter Storm Fern this January, I found myself heading in the opposite direction—toward the warmth of Nicoya, Costa Rica. But as I traveled, I reflected on the nature of "storms." Sometimes, we brave the literal wind and snow, fighting the elements to keep moving. Other times, we brave the storms of everyday reality: the systemic barriers to medical care, the scarcity of specialists, and the harsh economic structures that dictate who gets to see clearly and who does not.

Nicoya is a region known for its beauty and its "Blue Zone" longevity, yet it faces a critical shortage of eye care providers. In this landscape, preventable blindness is not just a medical issue; it is a storm that many families weather silently.

During our mission, our team had the privilege of serving approximately 800 patients, working hand-in-hand with the incredible volunteers from the local Lions Club. Together, we set up clinics to provide free eye exams, bridging the gap for those who otherwise might never see an ophthalmologist.

The days were long, but the moments of connection made every second worth it. I will never forget the smile of a young girl, uncorrected and highly myopic, who put on glasses and saw the individual leaves on a tree for the very first time. There was also the quiet relief of an adult patient diagnosed with glaucoma just in time to prevent permanent vision loss. These are the victories that remind us why we do this work.

However, immediate care is only half the battle. To understand the landscape better and push for sustainable change, I initiated three pilot studies during this trip. We conducted a survey to identify specific barriers to care and another to assess visual needs that can be corrected by glasses. Additionally, thanks to a grant we received, we launched an early screening and detection program for diabetes and glaucoma utilizing a portable fundus camera.

I am deeply thankful to the organizers, the volunteers, and the people of Nicoya for this opportunity. Kudos to the tenacity of humanity—to the willingness to brave both the winter storms of home and the societal norms that build barriers between people and healthcare. The spirit to help, to heal, and to see clearly always lives on.

Dr. Surbhi Bansal
Hopeful Ways Ophthalmologist,
2026 Nicoya, Costa Rica Eye Care Mission



Cookie Decorating Fundraiser

Thanks, Hofbrauhaus Buffalo

For 5 weekends prior to Christmas, Hofbrauhaus Buffalo held their annual Christkindlmarkt, a traditional German Christmas Market. This year, Hofbrauhaus Buffalo sponsored a Cookie Decorating Fundraiser for Hopeful Ways, where they supplied all the materials (cookies, icing, baggies, etc.). Hopeful Ways only needed to provide the Volunteer manpower. That meant 100% of the proceeds went to Hopeful Ways, and 100% of the donations went directly to support the Hopeful Ways "Gift of Sight" mission to restore eyesight for people nearly blind with severe cataracts.



Hopeful Ways
HOFBRÄUHAUS BUFFALO

Ceremonial Tree Lighting Fri. Dec. 12 @ 6PM

Join Us for a Magical Evening Under the Lights! ✨

Celebrate the spirit of the season with us and Hofbräuhaus Buffalo at our Ceremonial Tree Lighting at 6PM!

Enjoy an evening filled with holiday cheer - explore the Christkindlmarkt filled with local vendors, festive treats, and the magic of the season. ✨ This special event helps build awareness and support for local initiatives that make Buffalo brighter and stronger all year long. Even stay for a night of Bavarian fun & food!

Bring your family, friends, and holiday spirit - together, let's light up the night and our community. ❤️

190 Scott Street; Buffalo, NY 14204

An awesome gift from Hofbrauhaus Buffalo!
The event raised over **\$3,000** to support this valuable eye care service.

Thanks to the Hopeful Ways Volunteers and Hofbrauhaus Buffalo Staff who made this event a success!

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HopefulWays.org

Major Donor Recognition

Support for the Hopeful Ways' mission to improve, protect, and restore eyesight has grown over the past decade. **During 2025**, a few major donors deserve specific recognition. **Each organization donated \$2,500 or more**, and sometimes for multiple years. Two grants were awarded specifically for the purchase of additional equipment to improve the quality of eye care on mission trips. Other donations directly supported free patient services for the poor. **Hopeful Ways and the people we serve express our appreciation** to these generous organizations and hope that their generosity will continue in the future.

- John Newman Mission Community
- Lions Club of Lockport, NY
- District 20N Lions Clubs of WNY
 - (Combined donations from multiple clubs)
- The Phase Foundation Grant
- Asia Indian Community Foundation Grant



Thank You for Making a Difference in People's Lives!





Many thanks to Hopeful Ways' Partners and Sponsors for their continued cooperation and support. The success of our mission is a credit to their commitment and generosity.

Partners



USA, Nicaragua
Costa Rica



Curio 412



FONIPRECE
Ojo Sano
Eye Clinic

INFOSERVICE
SUPPORT



NEXgistics
A Better Way



Nicaragua Mission Project

PROVIDING HOPE. ENRICHING LIVES.

Sponsors



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Lions Clubs International
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The Phase Foundation

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Reichert
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