

Dear Class of 1995,

I want to extend my greatest appreciation for the award given to me for my summer work in Honduras. It was such a fulfilling and rewarding experience and I thank the Class of 1995 for making the trip possible.

I traveled to Tegucigalpa, Honduras and worked with the non-profit organization, Unite for Sight. Unite for Sight's goal is to eliminate eye care barriers for patients worldwide. I was able to assist doctors and surgeons in giving eye care to those less fortunate in Honduras. The average price of a cataracts surgery in Honduras is \$50. Before my travels, I fundraised \$1,800 and was able to help save the eyesight of about 36 people. I also collected 500 pairs of eyeglasses and 100 pairs of sunglasses prior to the trip and transported them to Honduras.

Each week, we would travel to local small villages on outreaches to schools, orphanages, and churches where we would distribute the glasses to patients after the doctor had seen and gave them a prescription. We would also speak with the patients and inform them of preventative measures they could take to reduce their chances of getting eye disease. We also learned how to do the visual acuity test and use an auto refractor on patients in pre-clinic. Each day, we treated over one hundred patients, free of cost. Patients on the outreaches who were diagnosed with cataracts were then transported back to the capital, Tegucigalpa, and were operated on at the ZOE Clinic. We got the opportunity to observe a few surgeries as well! On the days where we weren't traveling on outreaches, we worked at the ZOE Clinic, assisting the doctors and patients with pre-clinic work and what ever they needed during the patient visit. Aside from our role in the pre-clinic, we were essential in organizing the hundreds of patients both on the outreaches and in the clinic in order to ensure that everyone was seen.

Helping to restore the vision of these people was such a fulfilling experience. It was rewarding to know that I was working to improve the health care barriers that the world is facing, even if it was just a small step in the grand scheme of things. Eye care is something that tends to be glossed over when dealing with worldwide health care, but it is something that is severely important and needs to be recognized. People in these countries that Unite for Sight visits need their vision to operate and function for their daily work and survival. Often times, the diseases of the eye progress too far and it is too late for it to be corrected. However, blindness from these diseases is preventable and can be corrected if caught early enough. Vision is essential for survival in many places and it was amazing to be able to help people in the villages realize that they need to be protective of their eyes and to also help those who had already faced some damage.

Being a part of a greater team that restored the vision of so many people meant a lot to me. I know that I impacted the lives of many people, giving them the opportunity to improve their living and working situations. I was able to help eliminate the barriers of finance and education for a handful of people in Honduras, but I do not

want to stop there. This experience opened my eyes even more to the severity of the issue of global health care. I still am very interested in pursuing a certificate in Global Health and Policy at Princeton and am committed to fighting these barriers that prevent people from receiving care. Not only was it amazing to be around these doctors to know that this is what I desire to do with the rest of my life, I now know that I can also focus on the global health side of it at the same time.

Again, I thank the Class of 1995 for giving me the opportunity to make a difference and begin my journey of helping to eliminate patient barriers in the health care field.

All the best,

Courtney Balgobin

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Unfortunately, I could not take pictures at some of the locations that we visited because the children at the orphanages were in protection programs.

However, I did snap a few in places that I was allowed.

The first picture is of a few patients at one of the outreaches.

The second picture is the Visual Acuity test with only the letter E because many of the patients are illiterate.

The third picture is of me using the auto refractor on a patient.

The fourth and fifth pictures are of the ZOE Clinic and the Pharmacy outside of the clinic.

The last picture is a view of the capital, Tegucigalpa.











