

“It’s Bright!”

Two simple words were exclaimed by many of the 240 persons at the United Methodist Nyadire Mission who received a pair of eyeglasses this summer as a result of a partnership between The Nyadire Connection and Mission Vision, [www.facebook.com/Mission Vision PGH](http://www.facebook.com/MissionVisionPGH). This non-profit partners with other service providers to deliver free eye exams, eyeglasses, and other critical supplies to homeless and working poor in Pittsburgh and abroad.

The Nyadire Connection July Mission Team co-leaders, Faith Geer of St. Paul’s UMC and Molly Michael, plus Natalie Geer also of St. Paul’s, Mark Boyer and son, Logan Dutihl UMC, were trained how to measure a person’s vision before they left Pittsburgh. The team packed 2,000 pairs of eyeglasses in four suitcases to carry over to Zimbabwe.

“Although an optometrist does visit Nyadire, many cannot come or afford the service. News of the Eye Glass Project spread quickly. People came from all around the area, some lining up as early as 7 a.m. We registered 332 people of all ages noting their names, gender, presently wearing glasses, and how far they had walked. Each was given a slip of paper to record information,” stated Mark Boyer.

Logan Boyer recounts this incident. “ An elderly man arrived at the Mission carrying a battered, old backpack and said he had walked 30 km (@18.5 miles) to have his vision screened, I was astonished. The elder took his place in line and went through the process. But I was not prepared for the elder’s reaction when I fitted him with glasses. The look – the smile – a huge hug –

followed by his insistence that I accept the five ears of corn from the battered bag. "This was beyond me."

Wait time in the sun was 2 ½ - 3 hours." Crescencia, the Matron of the Hospital, provided space and assigned outpatient nurses, Dorcas, Evelyn, Winnie, and Esther. The nurses were able to ask clients specialized questions as well as to assure them they were getting the best possible fit. Elizabeth Muvi, a surgical nurse, was trained to carry on the project once the Team returned to Pittsburgh.

The standard E Chart was used to measure vision and was conducted by two persons. The chart was set up 20 feet away and various lines of "E's" were offered to determine if a person was 20/20, 20/30, 20/40. Mark and Molly asked, "Is this line better? What line can you read?" Whatever line was the clearest determined the strength of the eyeglass. Natalie recalls this experience. "The people would have to give directions of the letter E. Up, Down, Left or Right. Molly and I were always amazed how graceful the clients would point - almost like an interpretative dance! Now you can make your inferences as to some of the other graceful things the people do as a culture, or just the grace-filled lives they live."

A popsicle wand with five gradients was used to determine strength. The number was written on the slip of paper (R: -.75 L - .25). Logan and Faith were "the Seekers" combing the database of available strengths available in the stock brought from Pittsburgh. Various pairs were tried and tested by looking out the window at a tree and a house in the distance to see if the bricks were clearly seen.

Reading glasses were also offered after looking at the screening sheet, like the one in a drug store. Whatever line was clearest, indicated the strength of eyeglass needed.

Reactions were the best parts:

“IT’S BRIGHT!” “ TOO BRIGHT!”

“ I see leaves. Before it was just all green.”

“Oh, oh, oh.” “Perfect”

And best of all.

“Thank you for doing this.”

Faith’s comments: “The joy of seeing clearly for the first time was obvious by the huge smiles on the people. Parents were so happy to have this service for their children. This ministry is a blessing for those who cannot afford to have access to optometrists.

Surgical Nurse Elizabeth Muvi is the contact person who could restack eyeglasses collected from UM churches and distribute them. My dream is that an eye clinic could take place once a month and more people tested and fitted with glasses. We hope to have bins in churches to collect old and unused eyeglasses for Mission Vision to process and repeat the cycle. TNC chair, Drew Harvey took 500 pairs of glasses to Nyadire in August.”