



INTERNATIONAL

EYE DISEASE TREATMENT IN ETHIOPIA

So many clubs have succeeded with their International Programs with the help of Modesto Rotary's Mike Keckler. This time Mike is looking for D5220 clubs to come to the aid of a new preventable blindness program. Just back from Ethiopia, Mike has



developed a plan to treat 100,000 people for the eye disease Trachoma, one of the earliest recorded eye diseases. Although easily treatable in early stages with antibiotics, untreated it can lead to blindness. Trachoma, is preventable with adequate diet, proper sanitation, and education, and yet it affects 400 million people, primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and it is the leading cause of blindness worldwide.

The Rotary Foundation has approved a matching grant of \$25,000 and requires contributions from district clubs of \$7,100. Modesto Sunrise Rotary has already pledged \$1,000 to the program. The Rotary Club of Addis Ababa will partner with our local clubs to aid in the administration of the grant.

The disease scars the cornea, and repeated episodes, often starting in childhood, slowly obscures vision until the victim is blinded. Women are three times as likely to be affected as men. When a woman is blinded and can no longer handle household duties, the oldest daughter is commonly removed from school to handle the mothers tasks. Already impoverished families thus are further separated from educational opportunities and the path out of perennial, grinding poverty.

The World Health Organization recommends a strategy labeled with the acronym SAFE. That stands for **Surgery** to treat advanced cases, **Antibiotics** to treat active infection, **Face Washing** to reduce transmission of the disease, and **Environmental** change to improve access to clean water and improved sanitation.

Mike asks that we move quickly to raise the needed funds to assure a rapid delivery of the medication. A second step will be to apply for a 3-H grant, The Rotary Foundation's super grants to address problems of Health, Hunger and Humanity. When the program advances to that step, Mike tells us he'll be looking for some of us to travel with him to Ethiopia.

For more information contact Mike Keckler at J.M. Keckler Medical in Oakdale, or email webmaster@rotary5220.org.



DID YOU KNOW??

Rotary-supported micro-lending projects have helped break the cycle of poverty in many communities in developing countries. One such project in the Philippines, shown here, provides loans as small as \$50 to help women become self-sufficient business owners. So far, some 50,000 women around the globe have received loans, training, and support.