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### **Unite for Sight Volunteer Provides Education in Thailand**

*by Dave Bartlett*

**Unite for Sight (UFS)** is a nonprofit organization that enables communities around the world to improve eye health and take steps to eliminate preventable blindness. UFS has more than 4000 volunteers in schools, businesses, and communities around the world.

Vicki Simons, a volunteer with UFS, traveled to Thailand in March of this year. The purpose of her trip was to educate refugee students at the AEIOU Program of Chiang Mai University, to provide eye care at a refugee camp in Thailand, and lay the groundwork for a second phase program that UFS will hold in Thailand from December 2005 through April 2006.

At the AEIOU Program of Chiang Mai University, the course Vicki taught introduced the students to eye anatomy, eye health, how the eye sends messages to the brain, and diseases of the eye. Vicki used several hands-on games and activities which seemed to be effective and fun learning tools for the students.

Vicki conducted vision screening with three groups. The first was at the school in Chiang Mai. The next group was in Laktan, a northern border town 4km from one of the refugee camps. The third group screened was at the Kone Gyaw refugee camp.



Vicki Simons teaching eye health course.

The second phase program that UFS will conduct will include comprehensive eye care programs. They will provide eyeglass prescriptions, eye health education programs, screen for eye disease, and coordinate diagnosis, treatment, and surgery by doctors.

To lay the ground work for the second phase, Vicki coordinated with Dr. Eddie Win. The weather in that area is best from December through February, which is after the rainy season and before the heat sets in. Dr. Win will arrange for the government clearance that is needed to get access to some of the camps and for the security of the team. He may not be able to travel with the team, but does want to keep in regular contact with

them by e-mail, with a satellite phone he'll provide. Most of the camps are also able to be contacted by cell phone.

Transportation to the refugee camps will be the biggest expense for the team. Lodging and meals will be relatively inexpensive, and Dr. Win may be able to cover some of that cost for the team.

If you are able to help, and would like to know more, please send an email to UFS Founder, President, and CEO Jennifer Staple at [jstaple@uniteforsight.org](mailto:jstaple@uniteforsight.org).

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