

# THE COLUMBUS-ATHENS SCHWEITZER FELLOWS PROGRAM

Purpose: To facilitate service projects to benefit the Columbus and Athens communities, and simultaneously develop emerging professionals who have the skills to address unmet health-related needs throughout their careers.

THE ALBERT  
SCHWEITZER  
FELLOWSHIP®  
*Addressing Health Disparities  
by Developing Leaders in Service*

## An Eye-Opening Experience

Teaching Immigrant Families About the Importance of Ocular Health and a Comprehensive Eye Exam

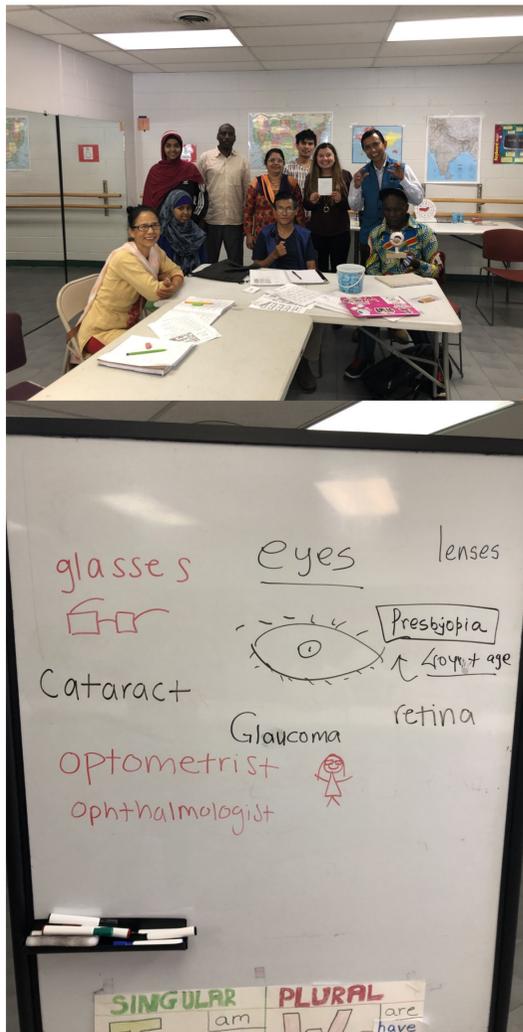
### Background

Columbus, Ohio has the second largest Somalian population in the country. In the country of Somalia, vision care is unaffordable and inaccessible to a majority of the country; according to the World Health Organization, blindness is a serious public health issue in Somalia. A low percentage of Somalians are educated on the importance of comprehensive eye exams and the prevalence of ocular diseases. Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS) in Columbus assists new immigrants from all over the world by English as Second Language Classes, job placement, and access to health care.

### Project

I implemented a program in which I would rotate between ETSS locations and teach about vision, ocular health, and eye exams. The project aims were to:

- Spread awareness about the importance of taking care of your eyes to new immigrants and new citizens
- Hold a vision screening to determine who in the community may benefit from a complete and comprehensive eye exam
- Provide assistance in receiving a comprehensive eye exam at either The Ohio State University College of Optometry, or Faith Mission, a free clinic.



### Impact

- I visited all adult locations, reaching 300 clients and taught them about eye care. I incorporated vision and health concepts into their English classes.
- Visited elementary schools in high immigrant population areas, teaching a program that talks about eyes in a fun and interactive way, reaching 300 children.
- Planned a vision screening with over 40 patients, referring those who may benefit for either cataract surgery, glaucoma medications, and/or a new glasses prescription.
- Did a collaboration with Aiesha Polakampalli and Jennifer Samiec at Ohio Reformatory for Women to discuss vision care to the incarcerated women in Marysville Ohio.

Feedback from clients:

- “This is an eye-opening experience!”
- “I never knew the side effects of systemic disease in the eye until your presentation.”

### Partners

**Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services** (Columbus, OH) and **The Ohio State University College of Optometry**

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my academic mentor, **Dr. Jackie Davis OD, MPH** for her guidance and feedback for my vision presentation and vision screenings. Also, **Dr. Bradley Dougherty OD, MS** for assisting with my vision screening. I would like to thank my site mentors for being so welcoming and being great leaders in the community: **Ram Upreti, Tatiana Bozhinovski, Suzanne Shaefer, and Dr. LeRoy Boikai PhD.**

“Start early to instill in your students awareness that they are on this earth to help and serve others; that is as important to pass on to them as knowledge.”

—Albert Schweitzer, PhD, MD



ETHIOPIAN  
TEWAHEDO  
SOCIAL  
SERVICES

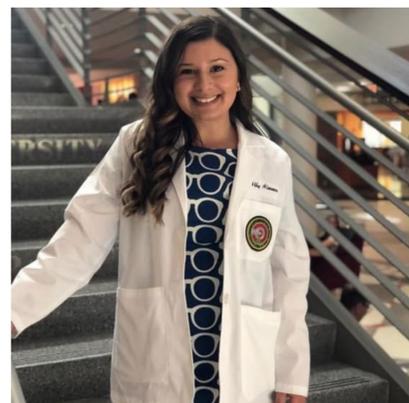


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