

GUEST EDITORIAL

I WAS PART OF A GREAT TEAM

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Because I am about to complete my tenure as a member of the OEP Board of Directors, Irwin Suchoff asked me to reflect on my years of service. During this time, I developed many friendships around the world with people whom I would not have otherwise met. Since optometry is both my profession and hobby, these friendships mean more than any of those people can ever know. In the course of this article, I will name but a few who are etched in my memory. There are many other special people, but to name them is beyond the scope of this guest editorial.

Following comments made by Baxter Swartwout at his recent retirement, I realized that he was the person I replaced on the Board and that Baxter had replaced A.M. Skeffington. I felt humbled to be in such a distinguished sequence. It added a previously unrecognized historical importance to me of how special my time on the Board was.

When I came on the Board, there had been many years of overspending and overextending of resources. President Jim Cox initiated the process for a balanced budget. While others sought this goal, Jim actually put a plan in place. This was continued by Joe Sullivan, and today, with the able assistance of Greg Kitchener and our finance officer Paul Richardson, we have reached that goal. With the exception of some past debts that are being resolved, the budget is balanced.

There has been an increased involvement in the international community. Last fall marked the Fourth International Congress of Behavioral Optometry in Versailles, France. The growth of international friendships and sharing is phenomenal. I had the pleasure of learning that several men and women from various parts of the world spent many hours preparing to present their papers in English. Clinical Associates from Germany, Spain, Belgium, Mexico and other countries worked for months to accomplish this difficult task. It was a touching and

meaningful recognition of the American roots of the optometric model of practice that brought us all together.

During my tenure we elected our first international member to the OEP Board. Beverley Roberts brings a fresh and valuable perspective of the needs of the international community. Meeting the needs of this community and all of our clinical associates is a work in progress that has been diligently pursued by this Board on which I have been privileged to serve.

We have worked with College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) on several projects including the Joint Practice Management Symposium on opening night of the COVD's annual meeting. We also jointly developed a second opinion pamphlet. We come together each year at the American Optometric Association's (AOA) annual meeting to discuss ways to improve working relationships and decrease costs.

Most recently, we completed a merger with the Baltimore Academy of Behavioral Optometry (BABO). This will provide a more efficient use of talent, resources and benefits to our clinical associates. Each organization had needs that the other already provided. With this merger, we hope to expand the diversity and types of OEP's educational offerings.

This spring, a Binocular Vision Kit was presented to every third and fourth year American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) member. The kit contained several small items and a CD with articles and other printed materials related to the behavioral aspects of optometry. This kit was very well received. Next year and in ensuing years this kit will be presented to the third year class only.

OEP was a founding member and active participant in the Infant and Children's Vision Coalition. This Coalition has grown from a rocky start to a credible contingent within the profession. Most recently, AOSA and the Association of Schools and Colleges of

Optometry (ASCO) became members of the Coalition. They thus joined existing members, the American Optometric Association (AOA), American Academy of Optometry (AAO), American Foundation for Vision Awareness (AFVA), COVD, EyeCare Council (See to Learn), and OEP. This group developed the continuing education courses on children's vision that have been presented in almost 40 states.

What I have found most exciting has been the involvement of OEP in more activities that involve and impact the entire profession. We have become an associate member of ASCO, and have active liaison relationships with AOA, COVD, Vision Council of America (VCA), the Partnership Foundation, AOSA, Operation Bright Start and See to Learn. OEP was selected as one of 14 organizations to make a presentation during the American Board of Optometric Practice (ABOP) deliberations.

Without the efforts of our Executive Director, Bob Williams, and the current members of our Board of Directors, none of the above achievements would have been possible. These achievements required the recognition that optometry had changed in its scope of practice and that OEP needed to adopt and adapt to these changes in order to be viable part of the profession and still serve the needs of its clinical associates. The Board responded in a wise and responsible manner. I have been privileged to be a member of a great team. Thanks to each of you for this opportunity. As I leave this Board, it is my hope that we can all work together to meet the public health needs of patients around the world. I look forward to working with new President Joe Miele in any capacity he assigns. I am confident that with his leadership, the organization is in good hands. With the guidance of Joe and the Board, OEP will continue to forge ahead and take its rightful place in optometry and the health care community.