



Lewes doctor opens eyes in Peru

Dr. Rodolfo Rios mission offers cataract surgeries

By Lexi Coon
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Dr. Rodolfo Rios, ophthalmologist for Atlantic Eye Care, is originally from Lima, Peru, but after many years of school he opened his business in Lewes in 2000. Now, 15 years later, his business has grown to allow him to lead a third medical mission into the jungles of Peru to a town called Tarapoto.

By collaborating with the Lions Club both in Rehoboth Beach and in Peru, Rios, who is a Lions Club member, was able to raise enough money and obtain the appropriate supplies

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-DR. RODOLFO RIOS

to provide free cataract surgeries to less fortunate locals in Tarapoto. The National Institute of Ophthalmology of Peru also provided doctors to help with the week-long adventure, and in four days Rios and his colleagues had completed 52 surgeries from a list of over 300 candidates.

"In any third-world country, there is a great need for doctors, especially specialists," such as ophthalmologists, said Rios.

From birth, many residents are exposed to the sun for their entire lives, and do not have the means to purchase sunglasses to protect their eyes. This leads to the calcification of the crystalline lens in the eye and the development of hard, black cataracts over their pupils.

"Cataracts are the leading cause of reversible blindness," he said. Surgery in the United States is much more advanced than that in Peru, and even though Lima is a more modern city, comparatively, the surrounding states are not developed. Some towns have places called a posta, which is a small office staffed by nurses and by a doctor who visits once a month, but those are generally only equipped to handle minor illnesses.

"Tarapoto has limited resources. There are two ophthalmologists in the area, but they're very expensive," Rios said.

To create a patient list, Rios had to work with the local media to spread the word. "They had every form of communication to get to the people, the radio, megaphones," he said. After residents signed up for the surgery, local nurses and doctors helped perform the pre-operation procedures that are necessary to proceed. "The beauty about cataracts is you remove them, you

put in an implantation, and you can see again," said Rios.

On this past trip, Rios' wife, Patricia, was able to accompany him to Tarapoto. "This is a way to give something back to my country," she said. Rios now has plans to go again in September 2016. "After this last trip, I really want to go once a year," he said. "We have to give back a little to our people."



Doctor Rios, center, stands with two patients after their cataract surgery.



Doctor Rios, left, waits with one of his patients before her surgery.



Doctor Rios, center, stands with post-operation patients in Peru.



LEXI COON PHOTO

DR. RODOLFO RIOS, center, stands with his office manager Virginia Smith, left, and his wife Patricia outside of his office in Lewes.

Trying to find the right spot on the beach is exasperating



AROUND TOWN

« Nancy Katz

W hew, we made it through the Fourth of July, which is always considered a landmark, sort of

a half way mark in the summer. For some of us though, we never got out of the driveway.

In other words, all those who have been to the beach, raise their hands. I thought so. Every year, I vow I'm going to take a day and spend it at the one place people pay money to visit, the ocean.

But I think something happens to those of us who live here year round and attempt to make it to the beach once in the season. I don't know if it's the milk white legs or all the sand

stuck inside our bathing suits, but it's definitely an out-of-body experience.

For instance, I will pack up that car, get to the park and head down to the water. Seems simple enough. The problem is that after I step in, just to remind myself how wet water is, I never can find my way back to where I put my stuff. Sure it might be the fact that I am just about legally blind, but I think there is something else going on. So when I come out of the water, which I am forced to go

into from peer pressure, I'm so lost I could just as well have landed at some beach in the Middle East.

Everything is a blur and I often say excuse me to umbrellas and sorry when I trip over coolers and offer to exchange insurance information with a beach chair. It's odd since my husband's eyesight seems to increase whenever we go to the beach. I swear he can spot someone wearing a French-cut bikini a couple of ZIP codes away. He's been on thin ice

since the last time a woman walked by with only enough material on her bathing suit to make a handkerchief; his eyeballs fell out into the sand and we spent hours digging them out. There were so many buried there it was difficult to find the right ones. Apparently it's a common male problem.

Anyway, probably the most difficult thing to do if you make that one appearance as a year 'round resident at the beach

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