



Australian Alpaca Association Ltd.
ACN 067 146 481 ABN 30 067 146 481
Unit 2/613 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham, Victoria 3132
PO Box 1076 Mitcham North, Victoria 3132, Australia
Telephone +61 (0)3 9873 7700
Facsimile +61 (0)3 9873 7711
Email alpaca@alpaca.asn.au
Web www.alpaca.asn.au

8 December 2009

AAA takes the Gift of Sight to Peru

The Board of the AAA has voted unanimously to support an initiative which will restore sight to hundreds of the indigenous people of Peru.

The deal, brokered between Quechua Benefit Founder and Director, Mike Safley, and AAA President, Dr Ian Davison, will be to take a team of Australian ophthalmologists to the Andes in May of 2010, to treat cataracts in the ageing community of the Colca Valley. The project will be backed by a generous subsidy from the Australian-based Ramsay Group of Private Hospitals, from which hospitals the team of doctors and nurses will be sourced.

The idea was sparked by an article sent to Ian Davison by Mike Safley, describing the work of Quechua Benefit (QB) amongst the Peruvian people. “QB has been active in supporting the indigenous people in the heartland of the Andes for over 10 years,” explained Dr Davison. “They have sent teams into Peru to provide the under-serviced communities of the High Sierra with such fundamentals as food, shelter, dental care, and emergency relief. They have also sent a team of optometrists, who have identified and recorded about 300 people with impaired vision due to cataracts. It will be the task of our Australian team to operate on those people, and restore their vision.”

Cataracts are caused by changes in the lens of the eye, often age related, and further exacerbated by the high levels of ultraviolet light found in the thin atmosphere of high altitude. Their surgical excision and replacement with a small intraocular plastic lens is the core business of the Fred Hollows Foundation in other parts of the world.

“Australia has a fine reputation internationally for their charitable work in this field,” observed Dr Davison. By representing the AAA in his advocacy of this programme, he hopes to engage the enthusiasm and support of its members in returning something of value to the impoverished indigenous people of Peru, who have shared their most precious asset, the alpaca, with Australia.

“There was overwhelming support at the 2008 World Alpaca Conference for the notion of *putting something back* into Peru,” he enthused. “This project will enable every breeder, however small or large, to make a contribution to the project, and to *put something back* to help those who have already given us so much.”

The team of Australian health workers will be known as the RAAATs of Chivay, (the Ramsay AAA Team), operating at a clinic adapted for that purpose in Chivay. Each member of the team will donate their time and service free of charge.

If you would like to ***put something back*** and support the project, please donate online via the Quechua Benefit web site at: <http://www.quechubenefit.org/Donate/-/Volunteer-5.htm>