

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Dr. Scott presented the following membership report during the State of the Organization Meeting at the COVD 39th Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado on Thursday, October 15, 2009.

Last year our 38th annual meeting was held at the Rancho Las Palmas Resort and Spa in Palm Springs, California. As usual, many people enjoyed the camaraderie, education and warm, sunny location. We had a record attendance for the meeting and many exhibitors. This year I hope you are enjoying the Denver Marriott Tech Center and the beautiful Rocky Mountains in the fall.

In case you haven't had time to read your email blasts, VISIONS, and OVD journals, below you will find some highlights of the events that have taken place in COVD this past year.

Tour de Optometry Program

Our Tour de Optometry Program continues to grow as we are adding the three new optometry schools which are opening this year to the program. It is exciting to start these new optometry students and faculties off with a positive experience about optometric vision therapy and COVD. I would like to thank Drs. Lynn Hellerstein and Carole Hong for their leadership and guidance in organizing our Tour program. We were able to visit 17 schools last year, including the two Canadian schools. We are grateful for the \$7,500 grant from the Mountain States Congress of Optometry which helps to partially fund the Tour. Membership for students and residents is free, and thanks to the success of our Tour, our student and resident membership has grown 12% this year.

Each year our Tour focuses on a specific topic. This year's topic is "Football to Neuroscience – Vision Therapy Hits the Jackpot" which will feature Larry Fitzgerald and Sue Barry, along with many success stories and video clips. We have found the success stories to really impact the students as to how vision therapy changes lives. We also have meetings with the faculty and administration at each school and have a presentation for the faculty.

In the hopes of helping more students and residents attend the annual meeting, we award travel grants and this year 34 travel grants were awarded.

Public Relations

Our public relations program is an important component in helping COVD to achieve its goal of serving as an informational and educational resource. In the past two years we have worked on expanding and updating our website, making it more user friendly and keeping current events and new information on the main page. As we all know, having a good website is now crucial not only for marketing but dissemination of information. We are currently looking for ways to improve the website and move it up on the search engines by having more links and keywords. We are also working toward an online membership directory, dues payments and meeting registration. We appreciate the time and effort that the international office staff dedicates to keeping our website current! We also appreciate the work of the Website Committee, chaired by Dr. Dominick Maino. Our website keeps improving, thanks to all this effort. If you haven't looked at it lately, please do and we are open to suggestions for additions to the site.

Our August is National Vision and Learning Month Campaign was the most successful ever. In 2009, we received 34 proclamations in 21 states. We were fortunate this year to have Larry Fitzgerald, last year's MVP of the Pro Bowl and one of the best wide receivers in the country, join us to help spread the word about the connection between vision and learning, as well as the benefits of vision therapy. We want to turn this program into a year-round campaign promoting children's vision and learning in the future. I want to thank Toni Bristol, for her help in making this such a success this year.

Our other big PR opportunity came from the release of Sue Barry's book, *Fixing My Gaze*, and Sue's personal commitment to getting the word out through lectures, articles, interviews and podcasts. Through her knowledge of neuroscience and her personal adventure into the land of 3D vision, she eloquently describes the difficulties she had due to her vision problems and the change in her life from vision therapy. This is a book everyone should have in their office to give to patients, referral sources and keep in the reception room.

Mission Statement and Strategic Planning

This year at the Mid-Year Board meeting held during the AOA in June, the Board spent an extra day with a consultant to work on a 3-year strategic plan for COVD. Our goals include increasing our revenues to support and improve programs such as public awareness, distance learning and member services, increasing our membership, increasing recognition of vision therapy and COVD within the optometric profession, and working on leadership training and our committee structure. These goals are very important to continue moving COVD forward and having vision therapy more widely accepted by the public and our peers. We also have a new Mission Statement:

Improving lives by advancing excellence in optometric vision therapy through education and board certification.

Membership

As of October 1, 2009, our membership was 3,031. Overall, our membership increased by 5% from 2008 to 2009. This year we have almost triple the number of Fellow candidates as last year, and with the recognition by the AOA of our Fellowship toward the new Board Certification process, I believe our Fellow numbers will continue to grow. As the public continues to be more aware of the need for optometric vision therapy, they will be looking for optometrists that can provide this service. We must continue reaching out to students and our colleagues to make them aware of how COVD can help them meet this growing demand.

We are continuing work on our State Coordinator facilitated Study Group project as a way to offer educational opportunities, facilitate networking and help us grow our membership. Thanks to Drs. Dan Fortenbacher and Carole Hong who are working on this project with our volunteers.

International Examination and Certification Board

The IECB members have worked very hard this year in moving 45 FCOVD, FCOVD-A, and COVT candidates through the certification process. In addition, our Fellowship Written Examination Ad Hoc Task Force did an extraordinary job improving our Fellowship written exam and adding 200 new test questions to our examination pool. Thanks to Task Force members Drs. Celia Hinrichs, Len Press, Dave

Damari, Irwin Suchoff, and Shelly Mozlin for their extra work in this area.

This year we offered the Fellowship written exam to the VT residents at SUNY as a pilot project to help fulfill the residency requirements and encourage Fellowship. This will be expanded to include all the optometry schools who want to apply for this process.

We have had a large number of candidates for FCOVD and COVT certification this year, and it takes dedication and effort to help all these candidates through the process. Our chairs of the Associate-to-Fellow committee, Drs. John Abbondanza and Marc Taub, have been instrumental in helping keep everyone on track and the mentors have been helped by Dr. Carl Hillier, who is chair of the Mentoring Committee. Linda Sanet and the COVT Mentoring Subcommittee have done an outstanding job with helping the COVT candidates. I would also like to thank Dr. Celia Hinrichs for her leadership as chair of the IECB this year and Jackie Cencer for keeping the process so well organized.

Volunteers and Staff

We should all give our thanks to the excellent team at the COVD International Office. I thank Pam Happ, our Executive Director, for her leadership and passion, and Jackie Cencer, Penny Melkerson-Kirby, and Kristen Miller for all their help this past year.

I really appreciate the number of hours that our Board, committee chairs and volunteers contribute in helping make COVD a success. It adds up to a phenomenal amount of time. It is great to have so many dedicated members who are willing to contribute time and money to our cause. We are a volunteer organization and can't do all we do without all of you! Remember, YOU ARE COVD. In this upcoming year, please consider what YOU can do to help COVD grow and reach out to more people.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve as your President, and for your support.

With great appreciation for all of you,

Carol L. Scott OD, FCOVD
President
