



# 40 YEARS OF AWESOME!

## 2022 Annual General Meeting Speech by incoming Executive Director, Liz Brant



Hello everyone, and thanks Penny for your kind words!

It is an honour to be invited to rejoin Seva Canada as its Executive Director. I'm excited to be checking back into the Hotel California, and seeing so many familiar and new faces here tonight. I look forward to working with Seva's staff, board, program partners, volunteers and donors to continue to further our mission of empowerment through sight.

Before we get to me - I want to talk about Penny Lyons for a minute.

It's not hyperbole to say that Penny is a force. She's a dynamic leader, who is also funny, kind, perceptive and loyal, and a great boss. During my time at Seva I was lucky enough to be mentored by her and watch her mission-driven approach come through in everything Seva does. Beneath everything was a foundation of trust and respect.

Trusting and respecting our donors with complete transparency regarding our programs, knowing that they would see and understand the value in the work that Seva does.

Hiring great staff and supporting them to do what they do best, empowering them to chart their own path to reach Seva's goals.

Trusting in our program partners, and appreciating that they understand their needs and their own people and communities better than we ever could. So, when issues came up Penny would go to them for solutions and help develop and implement their ideas, not the other way around.

And in turn showing our partners they can trust in Seva, that Penny would support them when they need it. When our partners want to innovate to deliver eye care better, more equitably, more sustainably, Penny would help them to do just that.

We have all been so lucky to have had Penny at the helm of Seva Canada for 16 years - it is hard to imagine Seva without her (and I'm relieved we don't have to!)

Having worked with Penny for 4 years I know as well as anyone that these are big shoes to fill. What I can say is this: I intend for the principle of trust and respect to also guide the way I work with Seva's incredible staff, board, program partners, volunteers and donors. I intend to continue to focus on equitable partnerships and sustainability for our programs - I see this as the foundation of how Seva Canada works.

And I guess I should tell you a little about me. I love to travel, I'm passionate about organizational strategy, and my favorite thing about work is the people. I'm from Calgary but have called Vancouver home for almost 20 years. My husband Aaron and I have an 18-month old girl and a 5-year-old boy who are joyful little agents of chaos. I love comedy and music and now that I've finished my MBA, on the weekends you can usually find me sipping coffee in an east van park while my kids go wild at the playground.

For the past few years I've worked at BC Women's Hospital as the Director of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and working in healthcare management during the pandemic has been a crash course in leadership under difficult conditions. But it has also reinforced for me what a privilege it is to be able to contribute toward something good in the world - whether or not we're the ones holding the scalpel.

We, all of us together, are in a position to use what tools we have - whether it's our time, expertise, or financial contributions, to literally cure blindness. It's incredible, and a huge privilege that I now get to do this as my job, and take my learnings from my fundraising background, my management education and my healthcare leadership journey, and apply them to Seva. I am beyond honoured to be taking on this role.

I want to sincerely thank the board for putting your trust in me to help steward this organization and further its mission. I can't wait to work together with all of you in 2023 and beyond! Thank you.

Liz

