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MEDIA RELEASE

UBC faculty members win prestigious International Blindness Prevention Award



Vancouver, BC – (October 21, 2008) Two UBC faculty members, Dr. Paul Courtright and his wife Dr. Susan Lewallen, have won the prestigious International Blindness Prevention Award for 2008 from the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO).

The AAO is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons, with more than 27,000 members worldwide. The International Blindness Prevention Award, established in 1992, honours "individuals who have made significant contributions to the prevention of blindness or restoration of sight". The award will be presented to Drs Courtright and Lewallen on November 10 at the Academy's Annual Meeting in Atlanta.

Dr. Courtright, an epidemiologist, and Dr. Lewallen, an ophthalmologist, are both on faculty in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Courtright is also on faculty in the Department of Health Care and Epidemiology. Dr. Courtright established and directed the British Columbia Centre for Epidemiologic & International Ophthalmology, helping UBC to gain a reputation of expertise in international ophthalmology, continued by Dr. Ken Bassett, the current director in Vancouver.

Currently Drs. Courtright and Lewallen live and work in Moshi, Tanzania, where they have established the highly successful Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO). KCCO, a unique training institution in Africa, was founded in 2001 and is dedicated to reducing blindness in Africa.

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On November 4, just prior to the presentation of the AAO award in Atlanta, KCCO will inaugurate its new three-story 25,700 square-foot training centre, at the base of Mt Kilimanjaro. The centre focuses on training, research and program development, aimed at decreasing blindness in eastern Africa, using local talent and skills.

“Seva Canada is extremely proud of Drs. Courtright and Lewallen, both for their award and for their dedication in creating the only training institution for community ophthalmology in Africa,” says Penny Lyons, Executive Director of Seva Canada (www.seva.ca). Seva Canada, an international eye care non-profit based in Vancouver, is a major funder of KCCO’s work in Africa.

For interviews, pictures, and other information please contact Dr. Paul Courtright at pcourtright@kcco.net (phone 255-754-971174). Additional information can be found on the KCCO website: www.kcco.net. Or contact Seva Canada at 604-713-6622, www.seva.ca.

In November, Vancouver ophthalmologist Dr Janette Lindley and her husband Daniel Peart will be climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Seva Canada and the sight programs in eastern Africa. Dr Lindley and her sister, Dr. Susan Lindley, also an ophthalmologist at McGill, have issued a challenge to their ophthalmologist colleagues to raise funds for Seva, UBC vs McGill.

Visit <http://www.seva.ca/kilimanjarochallengeforseva.htm> for more information or to donate.

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