

International Volunteer Program 2019

Canadians volunteer abroad to make a difference

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The Novartis International Volunteer Program (IVP) empowers employees to make a difference in underserved communities around the world. Employees donate their time to support local teams bringing services to the people who need them.

Novartis associates must apply to take part in the coveted program. The emotionally demanding program requires the right personalities, which is why participants from previous years who know what it entails take part in the selection process.

For the first time, in 2018, the program was opened to all businesses that are part of the Novartis group in Canada with four associates embarking on the cross-divisional IVP on volunteer trips to Kenya and Senegal.

Three associates volunteered time with the Familia Nawiri project at health camps in rural Kenya, taking part in education initiatives that aim to help address local healthcare challenges.

The fourth associate joined IRIS Mundial, a non-profit organization whose work aims to improve the visual health of disadvantaged populations in developing countries.

Prior to leaving, Novartis associates donated school and medical supplies to be sent along with the volunteers. This year, employees filled up 28 boxes with much-needed items. Alcon Canada as well donated many boxes of vision care supplies.



Getting villagers to attend the health camps is not a simple task. Different approaches are taken including a parade-like procession. While in Kenya, Kelly Anderson, Marie-Anne Paquette and Élodie Destable participated in a procession, as did the county's Minister of Health, - a testament to the importance of the health camps in remote communities. Set-up was at a local elementary school and the lack of equipment and supplies didn't deter the Familia Nawiri project from delivering health education and awareness on key issues to members of the community.



The many items donated by Novartis Canada employees were distributed to underprivileged communities through local organizations. One of the recipients included *Beacon of Hope*, founded in 2002 to support the HIV/AIDs pandemic among women in poor communities. In the photo above, students in Kenya hold math books donated with funds raised by Novartis Canada employees.



"This program is grounded so much in this spirit of giving of yourself to others, immersing yourself into another person's community and surroundings, and finding out what they can teach you."

-Marie-Anne Paquette



In Senegal, Martin Robitaille worked with local doctors to aid the community with vision care. One day, one of his co-volunteers noticed a homeless boy while outside on her break. The boy had impaired vision that he tried correcting himself with broken glasses that he found. He wore the broken glasses with the wrong prescription for many years. After a series of eye exams, he left the camp with glasses that were fitted for his sight. He was finally able to see clearly but it was the volunteers who felt that they had been given a gift.

"While I was at the camp, the clinic saw over 2,000 patients, and distributed thousands of prescription glasses and sunglasses. A total of 26 cataract surgeries took place. I can honestly say that it was a mission accomplished."

-Martin Robitaille

The International Volunteer Program is unique to Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc. and a source of great pride for all Novartis Canada employees.



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