

## **Pacific University Optometry Students and Amigos de las Americas Visit Nicaraguan Hogars**

**From March 18<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>, 9 Optometry students and one licensed Optometrist from Pacific University traveled to Nicaragua to share their skills with that nation's elder population. The students saw more than 600 patients, many of whom were elderly, diagnosing eye problems and fitting many with prescription glasses. The students of Pacific University worked in conjuncture with Amigos de las Americas, the Rotary Club of Granada, Nicaragua, as well as the JFR Foundation to accomplish their goals. Amigos de las Americas is a non-profit group that sends high school and college students to Latin America to work with host communities and partner agencies to address health and education priorities. The team of students ranged from their second year in optometry school to their fourth year and was led by Dr. Wally Walker, a local volunteer optometrist. The team also worked in conjunction with Dr. Milton Lopez of JFR who helped the team to navigate all of the paperwork through the Ministry of Health in order to perform this kind of work.**

**On their trip, the team visited Granada, Juigalpa and Jinotepe, and made stops at five different locations. These included the elder homes, or hogars, in the three cities, as well as the local zoo in Juigalpa and a public health center in Granada to see their patients. The team was able to give glasses to every patient who needed them, or sometimes two if they did not have the correct bi-focal prescription, as well as sun glasses to help protect eyes in a country that receives strong and direct sunlight year-round. Many patients were referred to local doctors for additional medical follow-up.**

**The team did an amazing job working under very tough conditions. Nicaragua is the second poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere so, accordingly, the need is very great. This work with Amigos de Las Americas and Rotary Nicaragua, is a great example of how JFR partners with other groups in order to improve the quality of life in older adults living in Nicaragua.**