



Kindness in Action (KIA)

kindnessinaction.ca

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ABOUT

Kindness in Action is a volunteer-run organization that provides basic oral care to people in remote areas of the developing world. Every year, KIA sends approximately 14 volunteer teams abroad to carry out free oral clinics between December and April. Aside from dentists and hygienists, KIA teams include any volunteer with a desire to help. To date, clinics have been held in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Though always outreaching to new destinations, KIA also returns to communities where it's been before. While in-country, KIA trains local people to become dental-health educators, and have even helped build dental facilities.

COST: Volunteers pay; average cost for 1 week is \$2,000; for 2 weeks is \$3,000

GROUP SIZE: 15-30 people

DURATION: 1-2 weeks

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS: English, Spanish an asset

ELIGIBILITY: Dentists, hygienists, dental assistants and technicians; anybody with a desire to help

HOW TO APPLY: Applications are taken between May and July for following year; teams are assembled by July; late applications are considered

GEORGE KATSAROV, 76

Teaching Water Management — Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO)

George Katsarov never stops. Despite his senior years, his volunteer vigor increases every day. "I want to write a memoir once I'm done working with CESO," he says from his Toronto home, where he is bouncing emails to clients in the Philippines. "The problem is, I might never quit."

It is this benevolent enthusiasm that carries the retired environmental engineer from day to day. Having worked as a volunteer water management specialist with CESO since 2001, Katsarov could not be happier with his current direction. "I love [working with CESO]; these have been the best years of my life," he says, animatedly. "I love helping developing countries acquire clean water; more people die from lack of clean water than lack of food."

It hasn't been a cakewalk for George, however; the challenges of making clean drinking water sustainable and accessible can seem insurmountable at times. Omnipresent waste water, poor equipment maintenance and a glaring lack of funds are just some of the obstacles he faces

regularly. But he has solutions. "The best recommendation is something tangible," he says. "Simple, inexpensive ideas and manual applications; we have to stop comparing everything to Canadian infrastructure. Speaking the native language is also very important."

Communication and pedagogy is a big part of his plan of action. Katsarov—who speaks English, Spanish, Bulgarian, Russian and some French—has educated more than 200 local workers on sustainable methods of water management. "I have led group training in many places, including onsite PowerPoint presentations at local water-treatment plants," he says.

Having lived in communist-occupied Bulgaria and Ethiopia (among other places), Katsarov has developed a matter-of-fact stance on the eye-opening experiences that a volunteer placement can offer. "It makes a young person a mature person," he says, pausing pensively. "You literally have to face the world." —AR

