



Speech at the Honors and Awards Banquet

Dr. Ryals, members of the honors committee, distinguished guests, my colleagues from Turkey, Dr. Gilbert Herer, Dr. Ruth Bentler, Dr. Mel Miller, Dr. Ross Roeser and Sharon Roeser with whom I had the privilege of working together at the international Special Olympic games in Shanghai in 2007, and sir, Dr. Richard Israel, my professor from whom I learned so much, first thing I want to say is “thank you”, not only for the American Academy of Audiology has given me an extraordinary award but also the inspiration to do more.

We, Symbiosis Volunteers have one humble and very simple aim; “we want to change the world” – so that our children can live in better conditions. Conditions where every child can drink clean water, can find food to eat, where a hard of hearing child is not hit by a car because he does not have hearing aids. A 12 year old girl does not have to become the wife of a 60 year old man only because she is handicapped; she cannot hear well. We want to change the world so that a 25 years old woman does not die of bleeding while delivering her 9th child; leaving 8 orphans behind and the orphans have real guns to play at real wars.

We have seen so much evil humankind inflict on their fellow humans in struggle for power, many evil only because of ignorance. We see natural disasters- earthquakes, draughts, famine, floods causing much suffering on our globe. We lucky ones can see the pain of the unlucky ones if we look at the right direction but we must look with our hearts and I know that, each of us do have that heart.

As we advanced in our voluntary work since 10 years we learned where to look and what to give. We became addicted to doing so. For example last may our team of 16 health professionals worked in different parts of Afghanistan performing general health screening for children. I did the hearing part of it, surgeons performed different surgeries, dental, vision and eye screening and so on. Now we have an Afghani surgeon being trained in general pediatric surgery in our hospital in Istanbul. He will go back and start pediatric surgery in Afghanistan, which currently does not exist.

It is a hard work many times; we receive shots against many diseases, we sleep in tents, it rains, we have to push the cars out of the mud, we use only one bucket of water as our morning shower, patients pour in until midnight. We come back home physically exhausted and very saddened because of what we have seen. But in a few days we start working on the new project and ready to go again. There is so much to do in some parts of the world; we managed to reach only almost 11.000 children and 4000 adults yet.

As I have said, giving without expecting anything in return becomes an addiction.

Do we not get anything in return?

Honestly, we receive much more than we give; we are also changing in the course of our humanitarian work.

And if we change the world can also change.

Thank you again, for the drive you have given me this evening to “change the world.”

Aysen Erdil
2009 Academy Honors
Humanitarian Award Recipient