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## Eye on helping out

### City ophthalmologist's West Indies trips make a difference for many

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**ATTLEBORO**  
The West Indies is a vacation destination for many travelers, but Dr. Frank Masci doesn't go there to relax.

He's there to help.

The ophthalmologist at Sturdy Eye Associates recently traveled to the island of Nevis in the Caribbean.

Although small, the island is home to more than 12,000 residents and has the highest literacy rate in the Western Hemisphere at 98 percent, but reading's not so easy if you have poor eyesight.

"Resources are very limited there," Masci said, noting that the island has only one resort and relatively few tourists.

Masci is among 10 eye doctors who visit once a year on a volunteer mission funded by donations to the Nevis Eye Care Program. The program funds expenses for medication, equipment and travel to Alexandra Hospital.

During a week-long stay, the doctors diagnose and treat islanders with chronic eye conditions, such as glaucoma. In addition, this year the South Attleboro



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Dr. Frank Masci, an ophthalmologist at Sturdy Eye Associates, is shown on the island of Nevis in the Caribbean. Masci travels to the West Indies yearly to volunteer to assist the residents there.

Lions Club donated 300 pairs of eyeglasses, which Masci brought with him.

The clinic was founded by an ophthalmologist who spent a good deal of time on Nevis and wanted to help the island. When he retired several years ago, Masci and other doctors continued his work.

Over the years, the clinic has grown and seen improvements.

This year, laser equipment necessary for selective laser trabeculoplasty, a form of laser surgery used to lower eye pressure caused by glaucoma, was added to the hospital. It allowed Masci to treat patients with a long-lasting

solution to eye pressure, which previously would be treated with eye drops.

As both eye care and medication is limited on the island, it's a significant improvement for patients.

"You'll be walking in the downtown area and people will walk up to you and ask if you're the eye doctor and can they get an appointment," he said.

Masci and another doctor will treat 60 to 70 patients a day during their stay. He calls the work "exhausting but very, very satisfying."

"It's a chance to give back," he said, "and the patients are very appreciative."