



Changing Lives One Smile at a Time

BACKGROUNDER

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(Photos available upon request)

Operation Smile Treats Tens of Thousands of Children in 26 Developing Countries

Worldwide Medical Charity Offers Hope to Children with Facial Deformities

Operation Smile's highly specialized teams of medical volunteers have transformed the lives of tens of thousands of children around the world as they offer their time and talents to provide free reconstructive surgery and related healthcare to those who suffer the shame and humiliation of facial deformities.

Operation Smile was founded in 1982 by Dr. William P. Magee Jr., a plastic surgeon, and his wife Kathleen, a nurse and clinical social worker, after a trip they took to the Philippines with a group of medical volunteers to repair children's cleft lips and cleft palates. They discovered hundreds of children ravaged by life-threatening deformities, and although they helped many, the volunteers were forced to turn away the majority who sought help. The Magees saw the need and Operation Smile was born.

Since its founding, Operation Smile has grown into a worldwide children's medical charity dedicated to helping improve the health and lives of children and young adults worldwide. In addition to contributing free medical treatment, Operation Smile trains local medical professionals and leaves behind necessary equipment to foster long-term self-sufficiency. Operation Smile conducts medical missions in more than 30 sites in 26 developing countries annually, providing surgery and supplies needed to repair cleft lips, cleft palates, tumors and other birth defects. To date, Operation Smile medical volunteers have medically treated more than 115,000 children and young adults around the world. Operation Smile currently supports programs in Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gaza Strip/West Bank, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Venezuela, and Vietnam. Operation Smile has been distinguished by many prestigious awards, including the first \$1 million *Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize* to recognize outstanding contributions made to alleviate human suffering, and in 2007, the *President's Call to Service Award*.

"When we go to a place and see hundreds of children who have hidden in shame, and at the end of a mission they suddenly have a new life, we have changed more than the lives of those children," said Operation Smile CEO and Co-founder Dr. Bill Magee. "There's a power in the volume of children we take care of. There's a power in the medical training we do that is essential. But the real power is the betterment of the human spirit, the fellowship it creates between people of different cultures, different races, religions and nationalities."

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With its world headquarters based in Norfolk, Va., Operation Smile draws upon a worldwide network of thousands of volunteer plastic surgeons, dentists, nurses, anesthesiologists, speech pathologists, child life specialists and biomedical technicians. For its International Missions program, Operation Smile sends teams of medical volunteers from all over the world on two-week medical missions to designated sites in 26 developing countries, airlifting millions of dollars of donated medical supplies and teams of medical professionals to hospitals in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Those medical teams work beside their local counterparts sharing knowledge and skills. Operation Smile's programs have always been about grooming self-sufficiency. Now, more than half of our partner countries treat children on their own through local initiatives with their own volunteers and their own resources.

In addition to International Missions, Operation Smile conducts education initiatives to provide our partner countries with specialized skills to treat children with facial deformities on their own, with their own resources, their own volunteers, their own supplies and their own medical professionals. Education programs are tailored to each partner country's specific medical infrastructure. Operation Smile integrates our partnerships with leading medical teaching institutions into our in-country medical education programs. Operation Smile's partners include the American Heart Association, Harvard University, Chang Gung Hospital and University (Taiwan), Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Duke University, George Washington University, University of Southern California and Yale University. The annual Operation Smile Physicians' Training Program (PTP) brings doctors from around the world to the United States for advanced training in their specialized skills. To date, Operation Smile has brought more than 700 medical professionals to Norfolk, Virginia, for PTP.

Operation Smile also provides a U.S. Care Network, providing a network of resources to assist families in the U.S. with children born with facial deformities. This network is accessed through the Operation Smile Website (www.operationssmile.org) and includes a listing of Referral Websites plus a Physicians Resource List with the names of doctors who volunteer with Operation Smile and are available to review a case.

Thousands of students serve as Operation Smile volunteers working to provide service, raise funds and spread awareness in more than 500 Operation Smile Student Associations across the United States and around the world. These students learn about the values of commitment, leadership and volunteerism, instilling in them for life the importance of giving to others. Student volunteers raise an estimated \$1.2 million annually for Operation Smile. Each year, hundreds of student volunteers from around the world come together to participate in the *International Student Leadership Conference*, where they learn how to meet challenges and take confident steps toward leadership and strong character development. At least two high school students accompany each international mission team and serve as student educators to present basic healthcare presentations to patients and their families.

About Operation Smile (www.operationssmile.org)

Founded in 1982, Operation Smile, headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia, is a worldwide children's medical charity whose network of global volunteers are dedicated to helping improve the health and lives of children and young adults. Since its founding, Operation Smile volunteers have treated more than 115,000 children born with cleft lips, cleft palates and other facial deformities. In addition to contributing free medical treatment, Operation Smile trains local medical professionals in its 26 partner countries and leaves behind crucial equipment to lay the groundwork for long-term self-sufficiency.

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