



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017 - JUNE 2017

OUR CALLING

We've been working hard for over 8 years to produce amazing smiles. It's our passion, our mission, and we're thrilled to take you on the journey with us!

Through our consistent hard work, we've been able to help educate and empower local communities and drastically improve oral health care. Join us on our latest trip to Nicaragua as we put a smile on many little faces!



OUR IMPACT

"My children are not waking up at night crying from dental pain anymore. "

- Mother, Koom

"This program is making a real difference. Brushing every day at school is helping set up healthy habits for a lifetime...& these kids will teach their kids!" - Teacher, Bilwaskama

"We are very grateful for the help teaching our kids to care for their teeth."

- Village leader, Kiwastara

THE ADVENTURE



The trip started with a flurry of activity! After two planes and a VERY long layover, we made it through customs (a journey in itself!), caught a tiny "puddle jumper" and landed with a bump in Nicaragua.

With our overstuffed bags in tow, one truck-ride, one hill-trek, and one boat-float later we arrived in the village. PHEW! (continue reading...)



Arrival... And Actually Getting There

After a short time to get our feet underneath us and organize ourselves, we set off in an ambulance and later by boat (pictured below) to begin our work.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Once we arrived, we went straight to work. First, we spent a full day debriefing with our team and organizing our efforts. This included time for creating improved methods for managing our inventory, project supplies, and internal and external communications.

Our staff was also trained in the use of a tablet and on how to digitally collect data using a new application designed by one of our partners. With a little practice, this will go a long way to streamlining our efforts and being able to accurately assess the project

Not the most exciting work, but critical to our program's ability to grow!



HELP ALONG THE WAY

Our group traveled by boat to a few villages down river. While we can use a speedboat, it is a very different story for the villagers who only have their paddles to fight against the strong current. This makes emergency medical care virtually impossible for these isolated regions.

Thank you to Partners in Health of Maine and Dr. Freecia Thompson for enabling our brigade to reach these distant villages!

Compassionate Relief

After setting up at the local clinic, we immediately went to work elevating suffering as best we could. We pulled lots of teeth (lots! see just how we did it on the right) and also provided cleaning and prevention supplies such as toothbrushes and toothpaste.

It's hard work, especially in 96° F heat and poor lighting, but for these people this is all the help they'll receive until our next trip.

Some of our patients had unbelievable decay. One 32-year old woman was suffering terrible pain and had a baby only 2 weeks prior. A hard life to live, and we were glad to be able to reduce her pain level.

Among the younger children however, we've begun noticing a general improvement to the quality of their teeth – the first signs that our education and outreach programs are having a longer-term impact on overall oral health.

COMPASSION MATTERS

Dental work can be scary but we try to make it as easy as possible! We hold hands, use distracting toys, provide pen and paper to draw with, and sing while we're pulling teeth. It might sound crazy, but it works, and that makes us all smile!



Extracting teeth and comforting patients during procedures – we're lucky to be supported by our amazing volunteers whose kindness is awesome to witness!



We pulled 108 teeth from 71 patients in one-and-a-half days. Unfortunately, we couldn't get to everyone because we ran out of daylight.



Teeth like the ones below are better out than in!



What It's Really Like

While our primary mission is to make healthy, happy mouths, it's worth pointing out just how difficult this is in such a remote region of the world, and how amazing the people we serve really are!

The kind of living arrangements and lifestyles these people accept is truly remarkable, as is just how happy they are with the little they have.

Conditions in this part of the country are atrocious, with insufficient latrines (8 in total for over 1200 people. Yikes!) and no wells or other clean water supply available.

On the left, you can see "drinking water" (yep, that brown, milky mixture in a 10-gallon bucket) and what people go through to get it. With water like this, it is no surprise that villagers are frequently sick with gastro-intestinal disease from bacterial and parasites.



Villagers also have to grow all of their own food, as there are no stores, no jobs, and no banks. This makes purchasing clothes, goods, and materials very difficult, if not impossible for many.

The final picture showcases a typical stove for this region (and just how ingenious the local people) made from ash and water and molded into a functional cooking range. The women here are especially adept at making do, and take care of their families as best they can with the little they have.



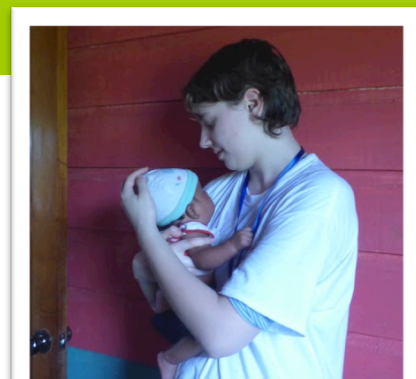
To see more about the living conditions in this region, visit our website www.SaveTheirSmiles.org and click on Media.

Learning to Be Grateful

For first-time volunteers, the difference in lifestyle is often quite startling. After an initial mental adjustment however, it becomes apparent that people are warm, compassionate, and live rich, happy lives.

It's an amazing, life-altering experience. Come visit to see what we mean!

And if you're reading this from a comfy, warm, well-lit and internet-connected home take a moment to be thankful you aren't out gathering





Preparing for Growth

This trip, we also engaged local leaders including village elders, community organizers, and the director of MINSA...

...and the response has been fantastic!

On arrival, our group met with the Ministry of Health (MINSA) to discuss upcoming plans for the program's expansion. Representatives from Save Their Smiles signed a letter of intent with MINSA for our mutual commitment to work together to help better local community health.

Community meetings were held with leaders in Raipura, Kiwastara, and Awaiapura a closely located group of villages known as the "Triangle." Together, we discussed the needs for greater health services, including latrines, clean drinking water, mosquito control programs, education, minimizing teen pregnancy and cervical cancer.

After our meetings, we received several new contributors who will be volunteering their time each week to help communities improve household and individual wellbeing.

We're thrilled at the level of local support and will continue to reinforce our current work as we eye expanding to address additional critical health needs.

Also In the Trip... A Happy Reunion!

As many of you may remember, donors to Save Their Smiles stepped up to the plate last year to provide a wheelchair to two children in need. Here's the happy end to that story!

We caught up with Bismarck, one of the two that received a chair, who is doing so much better! He is happier, healthier, and gaining weight because he is now upright to be fed. His mom is so relieved as she is no longer isolated in her house. The other boy is also thriving.

Two small gifts that have brought new life to children & families!





Thank you for helping us Save Their SMILES!

From all of us here, thank you for your support, kindness, and generosity! Your support is what allows us to continue this important work. We really couldn't do it without you.

As you can see, there's plenty more to do and we hope to expand our efforts to impact the lives of more children in Nicaragua and around the world!

What's Next?

There's so much more to share and if you'd like to learn more about our work or see more pictures from our trip please check out our website at www.SaveTheirSmiles.org

Next month we'll share more about our plans for expanding the program and give you a sneak peak into some exciting developments in our efforts to expand our reach. See you next month!

THE TEAM

CEO: Dr. Hanna Ekstrom

Board Members: Michael Jooste, Alysha Yagoda

Team Members: Clara Mueller Gomez, Polancio Celstino Dinkin, Rafael Pinock, Alberto Dinkin, Esteban Muller Gomez, Jaffer Jose Celestino & 38 Village Health Leaders

Advisors: Erlin Alvarez, Esmeralda Morales, Paul Foster MD.

Volunteers: Anya Ruetters, Ella Ekstrom, Alison Nakasone, Ashleigh Barker

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Share: Think our work is important? Let others know and help us spread the word!

Support: If you'd like to become a supporter of Save Their Smiles, awesome! You can learn more at www.savetheirsmiles.org/donate

Get Involved: Want to make a difference? Come join us on our next trip! Find out how at www.savetheirsmiles.org/contact-us

Follow Our Progress: We're online at:

www.SaveTheirSmiles.com

Facebook.com/SaveTheirSmiles