

Service Project - Sock Puppets!

The puppets are an important tool for the speech and language pathologists on missions to help teach the children about their cleft and how to form new sounds once their lips and palate are repaired. They are a fun way to encourage talking, singing, and playing.

See how sock puppets are used at a recent mission in Bolivia <http://youtu.be/3tKQyMATxdY>

Speaker: Cathy Snyders

Cathy Snyders has been a speech pathologist for over 35 years, and a volunteer with Operation Smile for 18 years. She has been on 25 missions to seventeen different countries and started using her first puppet, Kermit, on a mission to Haiti. The impact of this single puppet on helping to establish rapport with the children and families was amazing, and helped not only in breaking the ice to get the kids to talk but also in explaining therapy techniques by modeling through this puppet! Thus began the puppet project so each child can have access to a toy with an educational factor that will help them learn to speak, now that they have a new mouth, a new smile, and a new voice to be heard and understood.



Purpose of the Puppet Project

1. Puppets serve as "ice breakers" - students, child life specialists, and volunteers will use puppets to engage in play with children in a non-threatening, fun way. The puppets can go through the screening process and the medical/surgery process too! "Sutures" will even help the doctors show just where the surgery will be.



2. The puppets have "anatomic" features such as a tongue, lips and, palate - so that the speech pathologist can show the children where to place the parts of their mouth for different sounds, now that they have a new palate or lips! This is very important for children who are 3 or older and need to learn how to articulate.

3. The puppets will be used for the toddlers (1 and 2 year olds) just to encourage them to make ANY sounds or language during play, and used as a means to help the parents interact with their children to stimulate language development.

All children will take their puppet home to encourage carryover of therapy treatment goals.

How To Make Sock Puppets for Operation Smile

What you'll need:

- A sock
- googly eyes
- craft pom poms
- felt
- glue (that dries quickly and holds strong such as Beacon 3-in-1 Advanced Craft Glue)
- fake fur or yarn for hair
- Buttons, ribbons, markers, etc. for embellishments
- Needle and thread for sutures (embroidery thread or dental floss, and tapestry needles work great and aren't too sharp!)



Other accessories are fun, such as small hats, glasses, earrings, etc. Sock puppet materials can vary. It's really up to you what you want to use. Just use your imagination!

1. Find a suitable sock. Longer socks work better, one that goes up the child's arm.
2. Insert hand and locate where the mouth would be. Push the sock in to make the mouth. Cut a circle or oblong shape of felt for the mouth. Add a tongue with pink felt. Glue tongue at one end only so that it can be moved up and down by the speech therapist and patient.
3. Glue mouth piece in place. You can do this with the hand inserted. Take the hand out gently, let the glue set for a few minutes.
4. Time to place on the eyes. You can glue the googly eyes on the pom poms first, then glue the pom poms on top of the sock. It's easier to place hand inside the sock to get proper placement.
5. Glue or sew on nose, hair, clothing, jewelry, and whatever embellishments you'd like, to give your puppet personality! (Make sure everything is stuck on securely, since your puppets will be travelling!)
6. Sew sutures onto lip (one side or both) and palate (inside roof of mouth). If the patient receiving the puppet is only having surgery on lip OR palate, volunteer will snip the extra sutures from the puppet on site at the mission.
7. Mail your completed puppets to Operation Smile, 3641 Faculty Boulevard, Virginia Beach, VA 23453 USA. Be sure you include your contact information.