



# EMPOWERING YOUTH



ABOVE:

## CLUB SHINES THROUGH SERVICE

*From crafting toys for patients to showing off a cool card trick, the Operation Smile Egypt club spoiled their peers with creative activities during their weeklong [#StayAtHomeWithASmile takeover in May](#).*

*Such fun made for a fitting conclusion to a busy year for this superstar club. Not only did they serve on multiple medical missions — taking records, translating and more — but they organized the six-month follow-up care for 40 patients in Cairo.*

*They visited many schools, like in the photo above. They spread the word about Operation Smile, teaching more than 300 students about cleft conditions and inspiring 100-plus to apply to join the club!*

*“The smallest idea can change the world, and with such motivated and dedicated students, they are the true spirit of the organization and the fuel that drives us toward healing more and more children with cleft,” said Dr. Mostafa Abdelnasser, the club’s supervisor.*

# WHY STUDENTS? BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR FUTURE.

And since Student Programs has a front-row seat to the awe-inspiring work of our Operation Smile student volunteers, let us assure you, our future is bright.

Operation Smile counts on the compassion of students, parents and educators to help us bring as many smiles as we can to children living in low- and middle-income countries. From the hundreds of sponsored clubs around the world, to the student volunteers selected to accompany us on Operation Smile medical missions, we depend on our young leaders to build awareness, raise funds and educate others on our mission.

## OUR VISION:

We believe in the power of youth to create a compassionate world.

## OUR MISSION:

Operation Smile Student Programs empowers youth globally through advocacy, education, leadership and service.

Our student volunteers represent the future of furthering the Operation Smile mission. Volunteering with us affords them a fulfilling and unique opportunity to be exposed to different cultures, serve those who need it the most and discover things about themselves they may not have otherwise.



## OUR 4 PILLARS

Our student volunteers play an integral role in furthering our vision and mission and serve as a continual source of inspiration. Operation Smile empowers youth globally through:

- **ADVOCACY:** We inspire youth to be an active voice for communities around the world who lack access to safe, well-timed and effective surgery.
- **EDUCATION:** We instill the value of teaching and learning to promote social responsibility through exposure to authentic experiences, diverse communities and global health care.
- **LEADERSHIP:** We create the environment to empower youth to become globally-minded activators. We cultivate leadership by facilitating innovative and inspiring programs that teach valuable skills and grow confident leaders.
- **SERVICE:** We empower youth to understand the importance of being an active participant in helping others locally and globally. We promote opportunities for youth to volunteer and take personal ownership of a cause.

ABOVE:

### TAKING PILLARS TO HEART, CLUB EXCELS

*In 2018, the club in Rwanda got its start when a few medical school students crashed a closed-door meeting between Operation Smile and university officials.*

*In 2019, the club was busy making sure everyone knows about Operation Smile and its work - exemplifying Student Programs' four pillars in the process.*

*They've traveled around the country to talk with communities and deconstruct the stigma around cleft.*

*They've taught oral hygiene to hundreds of kids - and passing out hundreds of free toothbrushes - at many schools while welcoming the community to their own classroom for a free session on burn care.*

*They've been fixtures at medical missions, serving as translators and working the medical records station (as seen above).*

*And they've been rallying more students to join in the effort.*



# BY THE NUMBERS

Operation Smile believes in the power of our youth to create a more compassionate world. Instilling the value of volunteerism in students is not only an investment in the future of our organization, it is also an investment in a better world.

Operation Smile cultivates the next generation of leaders by working closely with educators to develop content and embed opportunities that educate students on the importance of being an engaged global citizen. COVID-19 presented challenges for students in the field, but our students found opportunities to serve.

**600** global leaders created  
28th Annual International Student Leadership Conference (North Carolina) | *326 high school students represented 23 countries.*

2nd Annual University Symposium (Virginia) | *79 university students from 44 colleges represented 14 states and three countries.*

7th Annual Latinoamerica en Accion (Colombia) | *200 high school and university students in Latin America from 50 high schools and universities represented 14 countries.*

**2,240** service hours completed  
on international medical missions  
42 high school students served as preventative health care educators and 10 university students worked as journalists in 15 countries. Through 1,000 health module presentations, they engaged with more than 4,000 people.

**26,000** service hours completed  
in their communities  
Student leaders from 300 clubs around the world donated their time within their communities, advocating, educating and showcasing their leadership skills.

**\$400,000+** raised  
These advocates rallied money to provide surgeries for people born with cleft conditions.



## *SERVING SMILES: PROJECT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19* STUDENTS STEP UP TO THE PLATE

To support hometown health care workers and restaurateurs during the COVID-19 pandemic, students joined our [Serving Smiles effort](#) and provided more than 4,000 meals to hospital staff across nine states in the U.S.

Students and their supporters [rallied more than \\$4,000](#) to fund the initiative and earned the support of U.S.-based chain restaurant Buca di Beppo, which provided 400 meals to hospitals in Pennsylvania, New York, Florida and Texas.

Wherever it was safe, students and chaperones made these deliveries personally while maintaining social distance, wearing masks and gloves, and taking every precaution advised by officials. When students couldn't go in person,

they made [thank-you videos](#) for the staff. [Celebrities lent their voices to the effort](#), with Kate Walsh and Bryan Cranston chiming in. Wilmer Valderrama introduced the effort to his fans during an Instagram Live interview.

The Serving Smiles initiative launched April 9 as students in Virginia delivered nearly 100 lunches to employees at two hospitals in Hampton Roads.

This effort soon expanded into Panama, where students worked with Operation Smile medical volunteers to arrange deliveries of break-room essentials to three hospitals. In Paraguay, students provided pizzas to first-responders, and undergrads sent more than 80 meal kits to Operation Smile's patients and their families.



# MEET MAEVE OF CALIFORNIA, U.S.

*“That’s everything to me”*

During ISLC 2019 and on the campus of Wake Forest University, Maeve was proud to share that it’s been a year since she left the operating room – and, hopefully, for the last time.

Maeve had the loving and caring support of her family throughout each and every surgery she received for her cleft lip and cleft palate. But she knows that this isn’t a reality for most of the children born with this condition. That’s why she began to investigate how she could help children who needed care but couldn’t get access to safe surgery.

Operation Smile was the first thing that came up.

“Having cleft lip and palate myself, I know how hard it is, and I can’t even imagine how it is if you don’t go through surgeries. I was dropped off at an orphanage when I was in Lebanon. I was adopted by a loving family and brought to California when I was four years old,” Maeve shared with tears in her eyes. “I was fortunate enough to get those surgeries and get it paid for. It wasn’t a struggle for me. If I could help anyone that’s going through what I could have gone through if I wasn’t as fortunate as I am, that’s everything to me.”

She runs an Operation Smile student club at her school in Davis, California, and they’ve done an amazing job raising awareness for the organization. So well in fact that a company from her community donated T-shirts for every member of the club.

“(Operation Smile’s co-founders) give us the opportunity to do this at a young age in order for us to be a part of the movement and not just sit and watch from the sidelines,” she said.

“If I get the chance to talk to a parent that has a child with cleft lip or palate, I would say: ‘Hang in there because it’s totally worth it. ... There’s Operation Smile, everything will turn out OK in the end.’”



# CONFERENCE WITH A CAUSE

## ISLC BRINGS CHEER TO CRANIOFACIAL CENTER

*It took almost a dozen people to wrangle more than 20 massive tote bags into the hallway just outside of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Craniofacial Center.*

*Each bag — basically a plastic crater with handles — was loaded to the brim with candy-filled goody bags, complete with handwritten notes. “Your smile is a superpower,” read one.*

*The [#ISLC2019 participants](#) were the superheroes behind this sweet service project.*

*For craniofacial center intern Garrett Bailey, it was moving to see more than 20 bags of candy lining the hall. As a former patient there himself, Bailey said he knows this will be a meaningful show of support for these families.*

*“When I look at these bags, I see smiles,” said Jessi Hill, administrative and clinical manager of the craniofacial center. She said that she planned to use the goody bags to kick off her kindness campaign at the center.*

The annual [International Student Leadership Conference \(ISLC\)](#) brings together more than 500 high school leaders from 30-plus countries for a week of cause and comradery. Inspirational speakers, hands-on breakout sessions and, ultimately, the challenge to make a difference in the lives of children born with cleft conditions, are a few notable features of this conference that has been held for the last 28 years.

In line with ISLC tradition, our [community of students born with a cleft condition](#) came together on stage [during ISLC 2019](#) at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. Joined by Henry Baddour, the founder of [Cleft Proud](#), they all shared their stories — and their mothers did, too — and they encouraged and answered questions from the audience. Ultimately, this panel empowered the audience to be even better advocates for people born with cleft.

While ISLC 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19, Student Programs is looking forward to our 2021 conference in Peru next July.



# MEET ARSEN OF RWANDA

*“Communities trust you to give them the right information”*

The mother approached Arsen during a surgical rotation, as he and the members of his Operation Smile club were translating for the international medical volunteers.

He may not have known her, but she knew him as the man in the Operation Smile T-shirt who changed her son’s life – and changed her community.

Arsen is a medical student, and to mark World Oral Health Day, he rallied some peers and ventured out to teach people about cleft lip and cleft palate. They visited her community, she reminded him.

Her son was born with a cleft, so she already knew all too well about the impact it can have on eating and speaking, as well as social acceptance. But her community was finally listening.

That day, Arsen didn’t just tell her that Operation Smile was there to help her son, she told him. He changed her community’s perspective.

“She was like, ‘All the people in my community discriminated against me,’” Arsen recalled. “‘They said it was my fault to give birth to this child.’ ... It was so deep, the story she told me. But when we were teaching in that very community, people asked so many questions about it.”

This is the power of Operation Smile student volunteers, Arsen said. They’re advocates and educators who lead their communities and change minds. He feels this empowerment most powerfully when he teaches others across his country about his field of study, medicine.

“When you’re a medical student, the communities trust you to give them the right information,” said Arsen who attended ISLC 2019 as a breakout speaker and team chaperone, “It’s a good space, and when you explain, they understand that it’s no one’s fault to have cleft lip or cleft palate.”



## PUTTING 'LEA' IN 'LEADERSHIP'

To say Norelyssa Peralta is a committed Operation Smile volunteer is an understatement. After all, she was on the leadership team made the 2020 [Latinoamérica en Acción \(LEA\)](#) conference the powerful experience it was.

“Living five days with people so encouraging, who push you out of your boundaries and fill you with all the energy you need to make things happen ... I think that is one of the biggest contributions Operation Smile does for its student community,” Norelyssa said. She represents her country, Nicaragua, on Student Programs’ elite Latin American leadership team, CUEL.

High schoolers and undergraduates from more than a dozen countries gathered in Colombia this January for our [seventh annual LEA conference](#), learning more about Operation Smile, global health – and themselves. They also took time to [give back to the community](#) that hosted them, bringing cheer to kids and adults living with disabilities.

They rode this momentum into the spring, no matter the challenges presented by COVID-19. Highlights include bringing together more than 500 participants for Student Programs’ first-ever all-digital international U-Lead – hosted on Instagram Live – and supporting our university leaders in Paraguay as they provided 80-plus meal kits to our patients and their families during the pandemic.

## ... AND 'FUN' IN 'FUNDRAISING'

*Student Programs challenged 2,500 students across Latin America to take on the Bill & Kathy challenge, a three-month fundraising blitz to cover the cost of surgeries for patients born with a cleft condition.*

*Named for the Operation Smile’s co-founders, Dr. Bill and Kathy Magee, the challenge put seven countries each on Team Bill and Team Kathy.*

*From bake sales to change drives to Instagram appeals, students hustled to top the other team’s total.*

*Ultimately, the students raised more than \$100,000 for Operation Smile, with Team Kathy commanding the lead with \$63,275.*

*As each surgery can cost as little as \$240, we estimate they helped to cover more than 400 smiles!*



## MEET MARIA OF PANAMA

*“People doing the right thing for the right reason – that is Operation Smile is for me.”*

The room was sprinkled with garlands, balloons and presents at *“Amigos por un sueño”* — “Friends for a dream.” It’s an organization led by a group of mothers who decided to bring joy to their children living with multiple disabilities.

From playing at the beach to playing the drums, the Colombia-based organization strives to welcome these children and adults and invite them on new and dynamic adventures. These women are trying to shorten the distance between their children and the moments of fun and happiness.

On a day full of painting, music and smiles, the Latinoamérica en Acción conference (LEA) participants carried out their service project activity at *“Amigos por un sueño.”* Students from more than a dozen countries organized in order to give every child a gift that included a smile bag with candies, a LEA backpack with school supplies and a T-shirt.

This service project was an inspiring day for the participants. We asked many participants for the biggest, most inspiring lessons from LEA.

For Maria, pictured here during this service project, said the experience inspired her to always give 100 percent to every situation because her peers need her to do her best.

“This LEA taught me that what it takes to make a significant change is to have the right group of people doing the right thing for the right reason — that is Operation Smile for me,” said the 17-year-old from Panama.

“(Attending LEA) is a unique opportunity to ... be part of this big group of people that is educating and getting educated to be a little piece in the change they want to see in their communities.”



## UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

# STEP UP KICKS IT UP A NOTCH

### UNDERGRADS DRIVE INAUGURAL PROJECTS

*When Operation Smile sees a need, the organization does everything it can to address it. In fact, that's how our two newest pilot programs came into fruition over the past year: Through our Cook Stove and Dignity projects, student teams are taking action to help improve the lives of our patients and their families.*

*More than a decade's worth of research has hinted at a [potential connection](#) between maternal smoke inhalation from cooking over an open flame and an increased risk of having a child born with a cleft condition. In the hopes of providing an intervention, undergrads behind our [Cook Stove Project](#) will head to Chiapas, Mexico, and work with a regional company to provide clean cook stoves to families who need them.*

*Program coordinators told Student Programs that many female family members at our sites didn't have easy access to sanitary products. Thanks to the early leadership of two university student volunteers in South Africa, Student Programs kicked off the [Dignity Project](#) in 2019, tapping undergrads to facilitate women's health workshops during medical missions. Students will provide reusable pads to the participants.*

Seated around an outdoors table well into the late evening hours, the cohort of undergraduate participants at ISLC 2017 made a case for their own Operation Smile university conference.

It's not that they weren't enjoying ISLC, they said – it's just that they already knew the fundamentals of Operation Smile that ISLC establishes so well. They needed more.

Now in its second year, our Step UP Symposium continues to deliver what those forward-thinking students suggested, bringing them to the next level with Operation Smile. Key leaders from the organization share how Operation Smile contributes to global health – and how we need students from every major to get involved and use their unique skillsets to forward our mission.

We like to say that this conference helps the students advance both cause and career. Professionals from different disciplines – medicine, business and education, just to name a few – spoke and offered advice for students' next steps, not only in their own careers, but in their volunteerism.

In 2020, Step UP participants brought soap and washcloths for the Dignity Project student team. Those materials make up part of a kit that the students will provide to the participants of their women's health workshops.



## MEET SHREYASEE OF INDIA

*“When we help people who don’t belong to family or friends, that is when you know the real nature of a person”*

When she closes her eyes, Shreyasee can still see the way the mother’s face lit up.

It was a beautiful end to the most difficult experience of her first medical mission. As a translator for Operation Smile, she had to tell a patient’s family that their child may not receive surgery due to a health complication. Illness, malnutrition, underlying conditions – these make surgery unsafe, and Operation Smile provides every potential patient an extensive health screening to ensure the patient can receive surgery safely.

“The family was heartbroken, the mother and father were upset and angry since they had travelled so far,” Shreyasee recalled.

Her attempts to comfort them were met with more frustration. However, at the end of the week, a surgeon cleared the child for surgery, and witnessing the mother’s happiness has stayed with Shreyasee ever since.

Shreyasee, an honors student studying English at Durgapur Women’s College, was a part of the incredible group of local volunteer translators serving the Durgapur medical mission in February. This was her second mission.

When she arrived at the cleft center, Shreyasee said she was surprised by the large number of volunteers from around the world who took time out of their lives to come to Durgapur and provide safe surgery to those who needed it.

“We can always help our own relatives, friends, neighbors ... that is part of our responsibility. But when we help people who don’t belong to family or friends, that is when you know the real nature of a person,” Shreyasee said.

“In the last mission in 2018, when I saw the number of people who came with Operation Smile, I was flooded with emotions. I felt so good! I felt like there are a lot of good people left in this world, and this is the example.”



From Nicholas Nottage,  
U-Voice student  
storyteller in 2020

*“Operation Smile’s faith in Student Programs means so much to me because they believed in me to not only champion patients but also track the gifts-in-kind donated by their corporate sponsors.”*

*“During my mission, I tracked the gloves donated by Ansell, who has been partnered with Operation Smile for four years. Experiencing the charity of organizations like Ansell, as well as health care providers and volunteers from 12 different countries, reinforced the importance of safe surgery and health care professionals working seamlessly as a team.”*

Nicholas is studying biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He hopes to attend dental school.

## U-VOICE SHARES PARTNER’S STORY

In a show of storytelling synergy, Student Programs’ U-Voice reporters teamed up with Operation Smile’s Gifts-in-Kind (GIK) department to capture the impact of our corporate sponsors’ generosity.

This effort – in the works since the summer of 2019 – officially kicked off with the U-Voice class of January 2020. These undergraduate volunteers, trained to serve as reporters on medical missions, are now required to follow relevant GIK storylines.

U-Voicer Nicholas Nottage was the first member of the class to report on a sponsor’s gift. During his time at our site in Durgapur, India, he took photos (including the above) and [wrote a story about Ansell’s donation of gloves](#) – how they protect our medical volunteers and make surgery safe for our patients. We shared the story with the Ansell team.

U-Voicers Sol Sanchez and Payton Davenport also contributed photos of corporate gifts to the GIK team from the Women’s Mission in Morocco this March.

# EMPOWERING STUDENTS & FAMILIES TEAMING UP FOR POST-OP CARE

High schoolers have long served as health care educators during medical missions, teaching the essentials from handwashing to hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

But in 2018, we noticed that our students were ready to take on another health module. We also noticed that our volunteer nurses were very busy in the post-operative department, providing medicine, caring for stitches, delivering discharge instructions.

So we connected the dots: Created with Operation Smile's Medical Oversight team, our newest module charges students with delivering at-home care instructions to patients and their families. Using an image-driven flipboard to overcome potential language barriers, the students help families learn how to help the patient best recover. They cover post-surgery diet instructions, oral care and follow-up.

In December, Student Programs Senior Associate Pete Hansen and students Sophia Wachtmeister and Matthew Deckerman successfully piloted the new module during a medical mission in Vijayawada, India (as seen below). It was very well-received by both the families and medical volunteers, Pete said.

This module is now taught during Mission Training Workshop.

## 2019-20 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- In the first two months of 2020, Student Programs held three Mission Training Workshops on three continents - in the U.S.A., Colombia and South Africa.
- Sixteen teams - 41 students overall - served on medical missions before COVID-19 postponed missions.
- The 2019 Peace Mission Student Programs sent nine rising high school students to Panama to explore relevant educational, health and environmental challenges. These students gained a better understanding of global health while visiting different schools to teach important health care modules to young students.
- U-Voice accepted its largest class in January 2020, representing three countries: U.S., Canada and Italy.





## A GLOBAL & ENGAGED AUDIENCE



INSTAGRAM | @osstudpro

- *Followers:* 4,266
- *Gender:* 78% female | 22% male
- *Age:* 49% 13-24 | 27% 25-34
- *Top countries:* U.S. | Bolivia | Paraguay | Nicaragua | Ecuador



FACEBOOK GROUP

- *Members:* 2,200
- *Gender:* 73% female | 27% male
- *Age:* 47% 13-24 | 28% 25-34
- *Top countries:* U.S. | Vietnam | India | Philippines | Madagascar



SNAPCHAT | opsmilestudpro

- *Friends:* 830
- *Core audience:* high schoolers



TWITTER | @osstudpro

- *Followers:* 752
- *Core audience:* educators
- *Gender:* 67% female | 33% male
- *Age:* 41% 25-34 | 29% 45-54



MONTHLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER

- *Recipients:* 11,300
- *Average open rate:* 35%
- *Average forwards per edition:* 900
- *Average click-thrus per edition:* 220

## 2019-20 DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

- After months of work, Operation Smile Student Programs unveiled its completely transformed [website](#) at ISLC 2019. To better serve our young, digitally agile and mobile-first audience, we designed our site specifically for smartphone surfing so it's easier to access information on the go. The site also boasts a much faster load time than before, as well as the capability to share videos, curate photo galleries and maintain a blog for students' stories.
- Student Programs' global newsletter, the Stud Pro Snapshot, saw its audience grow by six times in its first year as a monthly product.
- Six emails were sent to *638 recipients* as part of a newsletter campaign to share daily updates and stories from ISLC 2019. Often, these emails would see more readers than we sent emails to. Each edition averaged 360 forwards and a 50.7% open rate. This campaign also rallied more than \$2,400 in unsolicited donations.