



2023  
SUMMER

# Smile Report

Operation  Smile  
Canada

## Inside

- Efren's life transformed!
- The Champions program
- Dilan's charming new smile

## Celebrating Our Champions



# A Tribute to Our Champions

Five billion people in the world do not have access to safe, affordable and timely surgical care. In the next 15 years, an estimated 2.2 million more surgeons, anesthetists and obstetricians will be needed to ensure that 80% of the world's population has access to safe surgical treatment.

For 40 years, Operation Smile has been working to bridge this gap by increasing access to top-quality cleft surgery and comprehensive care in low-income areas with under-resourced healthcare. To mitigate the shortage of skilled health care providers and build effective capacity at the local level, we are committed to investing in our global network of volunteers. Operation Smile's Champions program creates opportunities for medical volunteers to partner with leaders who are on the front lines of cleft surgery and care.

We facilitate mentoring opportunities to accelerate the professional development of teams you will read about in this Summer 2023 Smile Report.

A tribute to our Champions would not be complete without YOU! It's truly through your generosity, combined with the time our teams of program volunteers freely give, that we will care for a million more patients – in more places – over this next decade.

**Thank you for being a Champion with us!**



**Mark Climie-Elliott, CFRE**

CEO and Chief Smile Officer,  
Operation Smile Canada



**Michael Bezuhly,  
MD, MSc, SM, FRCSC, FAAP**

Plastic Surgeon and Board Chair,  
Operation Smile Canada



*From left to right: Morgan Livingstone, Volunteer Child Life Specialist, Anne Trask, Volunteer OR Nurse, Dr. Michael Bezuhly, Volunteer Plastic Surgeon & Mark Climie-Elliott, Chief Smile Officer.*

# Efren's life transformed!

Operation Smile is celebrating new smiles and the bright futures you have helped deliver to children like Efren, who have been patiently waiting for the care they so deserve.

As a young boy, Efren didn't have big dreams for his future. He was born with a cleft lip and cleft palate, a condition that surprised his unsuspecting parents. He was lonely and treated like an outcast.

His family was his world, and they lived on one of the many islands in the Philippines. Their financial situation limited the options available for the cleft surgeries and care Efren would need. His cleft condition made it difficult for him to communicate and be understood by his peers. When other kids bullied him, he fought back and often came home from school in tears.

At the age of 10, Efren's family discovered and contacted Operation Smile in the Philippines. Efren underwent a comprehensive health check, and soon, surgery became a reality. In 2014, he received his first cleft surgery to repair his lip. A year passed, and Efren was thriving. In 2015, he received his cleft palate surgery. All this was made possible by **partners like YOU!**

"I'm so happy now, I can't express how I feel. It was so painful to see how sad and upset he was coming home from school," said Efren Sr.

Today, Efren is 18 years old, and his future looks completely different. Speaking more clearly, Efren has gained so much confidence and has found his place in his new neighbourhood, attends school and has a group of friends to hang out with in his spare time.

**YOU** have helped transform his life for the better!

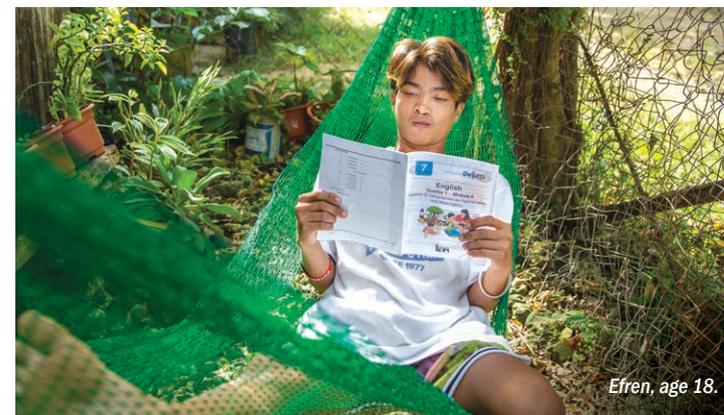
**"I am so happy and thankful because surgery really changed my life. Earlier, I held my hand over my mouth to hide what I looked like, but now I can face people, it's not a problem,"** Efren shared, beaming with his new smile.



Efren, age 18.



Efren (second from left), age 18, with friends.



Efren, age 18.



Efren (second from right), age 11, with friends.

There's more to this story. Watch the video at [operationsmile.ca/efren](https://operationsmile.ca/efren)

# The Champions Program: Education and Transformation

In the next 15 years, 2.2 million more surgeons, anesthesiologists and obstetricians will be required to ensure that 80% of the world's population can access safe surgical treatment.

For 40 years, Operation Smile has been working to mitigate the shortage of skilled healthcare providers and build an effective capacity at the local level. Our ongoing commitment to investing in a global network of medical volunteers helped shape our Champions program.

The Champions program creates opportunities for our medical volunteers to partner with medical leaders who are on the front lines of cleft surgery and care in their countries. Increasing access to cleft surgery and care means addressing the gaps in the health system that create barriers for patients in need of care. Our Champions allow us to engage with strategic hospital partners, academic institutions and governments and effectively advocate for more equitable access to cleft care.

Every surgical table also serves as an education table. Our global medical volunteers are trained in plastic surgery,

anesthesiology, surgical instrumentation, pediatrics, psychology, speech therapy, clinical photography, medical records, dentistry, nursing and more!

Our Champions are mentors, thought leaders and advocates for the children we serve, and **YOU are their CHAMPION** too.



Marcela, Executive Director of Operation Smile, in Colombia with Sheila.

## Operation Smile CHAMPIONS



Luz & her mother, awaiting surgery.



Surgical Champion from Canada, Dr. Michael Bezuhly (second from left) with Dr. Mauricio Herrera, Surgical Champion Colombia (far right) & team.



Julián, Medical Records Volunteer (mentee) & Alejandra, Odontologist Coordinator (mentee), with Emmanuel.

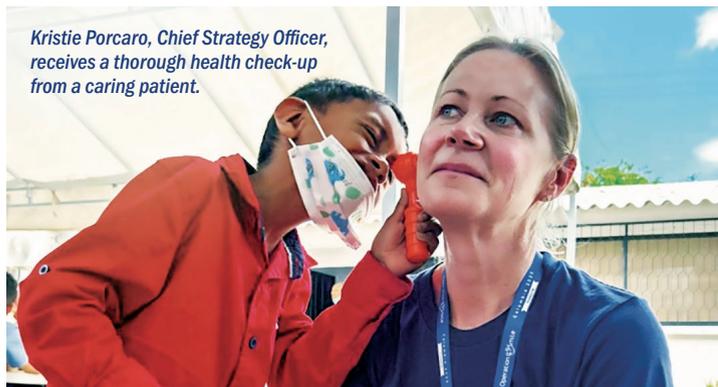


(Left to right) Plastic Surgeon Volunteers, Dr. Ana María (Champion), & Dr. Elisa (mentee).

# Celebrating Our Champions

## In Colombia

The first Champions program in Colombia was held in February 2023, in which 18 experts in different specialties from Canada, the USA, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela came to Colombia to work with local Champions. They helped strengthen Riohacha's district hospital and trained more medical volunteers in the northeast region of Colombia, where many of our patients live. During the program, 50 children with cleft lips and cleft palates received medical assessments and cleft surgery.



*Kristie Porcaro, Chief Strategy Officer, receives a thorough health check-up from a caring patient.*



**“I can define the Champions program as **The Future** because it is how we can offer better care to more children with this condition worldwide. It is very positive to know that, in Colombia, our patients are in the hands of very capable professionals.”**

**- Dr. Michael Bezuhly,**  
Canadian Champion Volunteer (Surgery)



*Julián, Medial Records Volunteer, with baby Gabriel.*



*(Left to right) Plastic Surgeon Volunteers, Dr. Elisa (mentee), Dr. Ana María (Champion) & Dr. Lina (mentee).*



*Morgan Livingstone, Volunteer Child Life Specialist Champion.*



*Maria, Nurse Volunteer (mentee), with Pedro, Anatalia & Sheila (left to right).*

## In Bolivia

In March 2023, 100 global medical volunteers participated in Operation Smile's Champions program in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. 64 children received life-changing cleft surgery during the program **because of caring partners like YOU.**

We are grateful for your ongoing partnership with Operation Smile as we work to expand cleft care in Bolivia. **Thank you!**

*Dr. Quiroga, Plastic Surgeon (mentee), with Zahir.*



*Anesthesiologists preparing for surgery.*



*Anesthesiologist Champion Volunteers.*



*Local Volunteers with Ayme, Milan & Santiago.*



## In Guatemala

In April 2023, our second Champions program in Guatemala delivered 23 new smiles to children with cleft lips and cleft palates! Canadian volunteer nurse Vanessa Espinoza completed her first Champions program in Escuintla, Guatemala.

Together, with your support and the contributions of our Canadian and global medical volunteers, we are making life-changing differences for children with cleft conditions in Guatemala. **Thank you!**

*Vanessa Espinoza, far left, with OR Nurse Team.*



*Surgical Champions at work.*



*Global Medical Volunteer Team.*



Dilan, age 4.



Dilan, age 4, with his mother, Sandy.



Dilan (right), age 4, with a friend.

## Dilan's charming new smile

Sandy was heartbroken to see how people treated Dilan differently. She thought her son was beautiful and wanted her community to look past his cleft condition.

When Sandy saw her newborn son's smile, she knew their lives would never be the same again. As Dilan grew older, surgery remained out of reach, and he realized that his smile looked different from other children's.

Sandy had no idea where to turn for help. She was afraid and wanted to find the vital cleft care Dilan needed. That's when she remembered Yuri, a family friend whose son was born with a cleft condition. She soon discovered that Yuri's son had received his beautiful new smile from Operation Smile in Guatemala three years earlier.

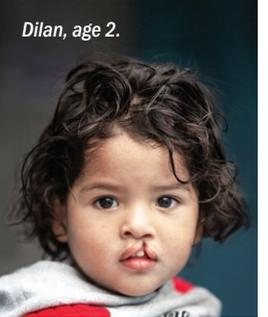
Despite travelling to Operation Smile in Guatemala twice and having surgery delayed each time due to Dilan's health, Sandy never lost hope for her son's brand-new smile. "I felt confident, welcomed by all. I trust you. I know he's in excellent hands," she said.

That hope, however, was put on hold as the world began to experience the first effects of the pandemic. Through it

all, Operation Smile's volunteers kept in touch with Sandy and Dilan and provided necessary cleft care. In 2020, Dilan received his long-awaited cleft lip surgery and Sandy was thrilled!

"I'm always going to be grateful to all the people who have helped me because they've never left me helpless since our first visit," she said, "If I hadn't found Operation Smile, I don't know what I would have done."

Today, 4-year-old Dilan is happy, and Sandy doesn't worry about how other children will treat him. He likes to play ball and loves toy cars. We're celebrating Dilan's brighter future and his charming new smile that will light up your eyes, **thanks to CHAMPIONS like YOU!**



Dilan, age 2.



There's more to this story. Watch the video at [operationsmile.ca/dilan](https://operationsmile.ca/dilan)



# Thank you!

We simply would not be where we are today without our highly skilled global volunteers and your partnership. We're celebrating your commitment and generosity that ensure our plans to assist an additional million patients, marking a significant achievement in 2023.

The children whose lives you have transformed have expressed their gratitude and joy for YOU through these beautiful drawings. Thank you for making futures brighter – **one smile at a time.**



View more with translations at [operationsmile.ca/thankyou](https://operationsmile.ca/thankyou)



Britany, age 15, from Honduras.



# A Gift in Your Will

You probably have a will. Perhaps you're thinking about getting one drawn up. Maybe your circumstances have changed and it's time for an update. Each step is important because it shows you care about what's meaningful to you: family, friends, your community and the children with cleft conditions that you help with every gift.

By including Operation Smile Canada in your will or estate planning, you can ensure that you'll always be there for children in need. As our global teams move forward with many more surgical programs to address the backlog from the pandemic, please take the time to discover more about how you can leave a gift for Operation Smile Canada in your will.

## Begin the conversation today.

Please contact:  
**Paige Melvin,**  
Philanthropy Associate

Phone: **647-952-8081**  
Toll-free: 1-844-376-4530 Ext. 124  
Email: [paige.melvin@operationsmile.org](mailto:paige.melvin@operationsmile.org)



Learn more at [operationsmile.ca/pleasegive](https://operationsmile.ca/pleasegive)



## Become a **SMILE PARTNER** Always Be There for the Children

Every gift leads to a smile and means the world to a child who needs your help. A great way to help more children is to become a monthly **SMILE PARTNER**. Giving monthly is an easy, budget-friendly way for you to **deliver impact to the children every month**. You'll keep them healthy before, during and after their surgery, ensuring care every step of the way.

More and more surgeries are resuming where it's safe for patients and medical volunteers. Together with you, we can help deliver life-changing surgery and comprehensive cleft care to thousands of children who want nothing more than a new smile.

Call us at **1.844.376.4530** or visit **operationsmile.ca** and become a **SMILE PARTNER** today. Thank you.

## We're Here to Serve You

From making a donation over the phone, updating your contact information, changing your credit card or banking information, to discussing the impact of your gift or how to have a lasting impact with a gift made through your will, we're always so pleased to hear from you.

 @operationsmilecanada

 /operationsmilecanada

 [www.operationsmile.ca](http://www.operationsmile.ca)



*Diian, age 4,  
from Guatemala.*

OSCO032 NL

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