



**Himalayan
Dental
Relief
Project**

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dental Hygienists Dedicated Humanitarians

Experience Results in Even Greater Commitment

(Denver, CO, June 15, 2009) – Since 2001, the Himalayan Dental Relief Project (HDRP) has been providing dental care to impoverished children around the globe. The organization's success has been due, in large part, to the dedication of the dental hygienists who support it. To date, 35 hygienists from 12 states and Switzerland have donated their time in Nepal, Guatemala, India and Vietnam to serve almost 35,000 children. Many have traveled multiple times with HDRP as volunteers, and a few dedicate several weeks each year to the organization.

Here are some of the stories of the wonderful, dedicated volunteers.

Andrea Hall - Colorado

Andrea Hall, a volunteer since 2003, has worked with HDRP in India and Nepal, and is preparing now for her fifth trip to Nepal in the spring of 2010. She has fallen in love with the children of Nepal and India, particularly those in the remote mountain villages.

Working in Nepal in 2008, she was assisted by Kunchok Lundrup, 16, an earnest, hardworking young student. At his school, students who excel in their daily schoolwork are rewarded by being allowed to work in the dental camp. When that camp ended, Andrea and Kunchok traveled to a remote monastery and, as a team, brought important oral hygiene care to a group of monastics in remote Nepal. Andrea returns to Nepal next spring to renew this friendship and work again with Kunchok.

Maria Glashoff - California

Maria Glashoff had been thinking about doing humanitarian work for more than thirty years, since first being introduced to the idea by a local clergyman. She learned of HDRP and their work overseas while attending the California Dental Association annual convention in the fall of 2006, signed up on the spot, and has become a dedicated, repeat volunteer who now plans to come every year.

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“I know we were there to help others, but I feel that I am the one who benefited,” says Maria. “I came home feeling uplifted and invigorated. Most of all I feel grateful for all that I have been given in life, including the opportunity that we all have in this country to educate and better ourselves, so that we can serve others.”

Maria has now traveled to Guatemala three times for volunteer dental camps, once to India, and is scheduled to return to Guatemala this summer. She has introduced HDRP’s mission to her friends, family and community and enlists their support in funding her trips. In addition to her work as a Dental Hygienist, she and her husband, Larry, operate a working farm, continuing the tradition of their families for several generations.

Penney Robinson - Georgia

Penney Robinson first traveled with HDRP to the Mayan Highlands of Guatemala in 2007. She fell in love with the children, returned in 2008 and will join the next clinic there in July 2010. Penney trained as a hygienist as a second career and is particularly grateful to have found such a moving way to share her new skills. “The faces of these children will long linger in my mind,” says Penney.

Like many volunteers, Penney was amazed to find that so many people in the world, both in our own country and abroad, have no knowledge of dental care and no way to receive it. “Groups like HDRP are doing a fabulous job of providing care and education. Having recently become aware of the dental needs of so many people in our own country, I plan to continue to do whatever I can to help, both nationally and internationally,” adds Penney.

Donna Seaman, Colorado

A hygienist for 45 years, Donna Seaman first traveled with HDRP to Nepal in the fall of 2007, has since been to Vietnam and will travel to India in the fall of 2009. Since her first experience with HDRP, Donna has also been a stateside volunteer – giving one day a week and devoting herself to ordering, packing and shipping the supply bags to volunteers for them to take as luggage as they travel to the clinics overseas. She is now the self-described “stuff lady” who efficiently packs the mounds of supplies and instruments needed to keep each country clinic functioning.

Julie Dinh - Oregon

Julie Dinh was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the United States as a child. She has been a practicing hygienist in Portland, Oregon, for five years. Julie has always had a strong desire to return to Vietnam to visit. In the fall of 2007, she joined HDRP and their local partner, the East Meets West Foundation, for a weeklong clinic in the central part of Vietnam, outside of Danang. “What better way to see how the Vietnamese live than through humanitarian work,” says Julie. “You get the opportunity to meet local people and listen to them share their stories. The trip was a wonderful and touching experience.”

Oral health education and access to care is severely lacking Vietnam. Julie cites her understanding of the language and culture as a huge asset in providing care to these children. “Being able to communicate made it so much easier to appreciate the limits of their knowledge of dental hygiene. Lack of knowledge goes hand in hand with fear – how do you change the mentality of the people so that they understand the importance of taking care of their teeth? It takes very little time to volunteer in one of these clinics, and it makes a huge impact on so many lives. I am looking forward to continuing to volunteer both internationally and at home.”

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Dee Osell - Minnesota

Dee Osell has a huge heart and is no stranger to volunteer work. Committing one month each year to support HDRP, Dee typically arrives in Nepal in the fall, works two dental camps and spends her remaining time going from school to school, tirelessly demonstrate brushing, and explain the basics of oral health. She is dedicated, highly energetic, and wonderful with the children who find her blond hair and rapid patter a highly sought after portion of their school day. She is accompanied by her husband, Jeff Edwards, an airline mechanic who is invaluable in keeping clinic generators, compressors and dental units functioning smoothly.

Dee began her volunteer work on the Mercy Ships in Benin and Sierra Leone, Africa, over ten years ago. For the past six years she has volunteered extensively on HDRP projects, working in all four project locations of Vietnam, India, Guatemala and Nepal. “I find the work addictive,” says Dee. “I enjoy learning about other cultures. I think it gives me a better understanding of people and more respect for our differences.”

Many More Volunteers

In addition to these dedicated volunteers, HDRP has been helped by so many others. Since 2001, HDRP has hosted over 180 dentists, 35 hygienists, numerous dental assistants and many non-medical volunteers who support the clinic by managing the lines of patients, maintaining records, sterilizing instruments and managing overall clinic logistics. This has enabled the organization to reach more and more children each year and to expand its reach from one country to four. Because of this expanded reach, the organization will change its name later this year to Global Dental Relief, in partnership with its volunteer arm, Global Dental Expeditions.

HDRP hosts approximately ten dental trips a year, each trip comprising up to seven dentists and hygienists, several dental assistants and five to seven non-medical volunteers. HDRP is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. For more information, to donate or volunteer, please visit himalayandental.com or email Kim Troggio at kim@humanitariantours.com.

About Himalayan Dental Relief Project

The Himalayan Dental Relief Project (HDRP) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization established in 2000 to provide free dental care and oral health education to impoverished children and families of Nepal, northern India and selected locations in Vietnam and Guatemala. HDRP’s commitment is to return to these same children every two years to provide continuous care.

Treatment and preventative care is provided by volunteer health professionals, who donate their time to treat children during intensive seven-day dental camps. Camps generally include up to five dentists, five hygienists and five to ten non-medical volunteers. Each camp treats 500 – 700 children. Since 2001, HDRP has hosted more than 610 volunteers and treated 34,600 children.

For more information about the Himalayan Dental Relief Project, visit www.himalayandental.com.

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