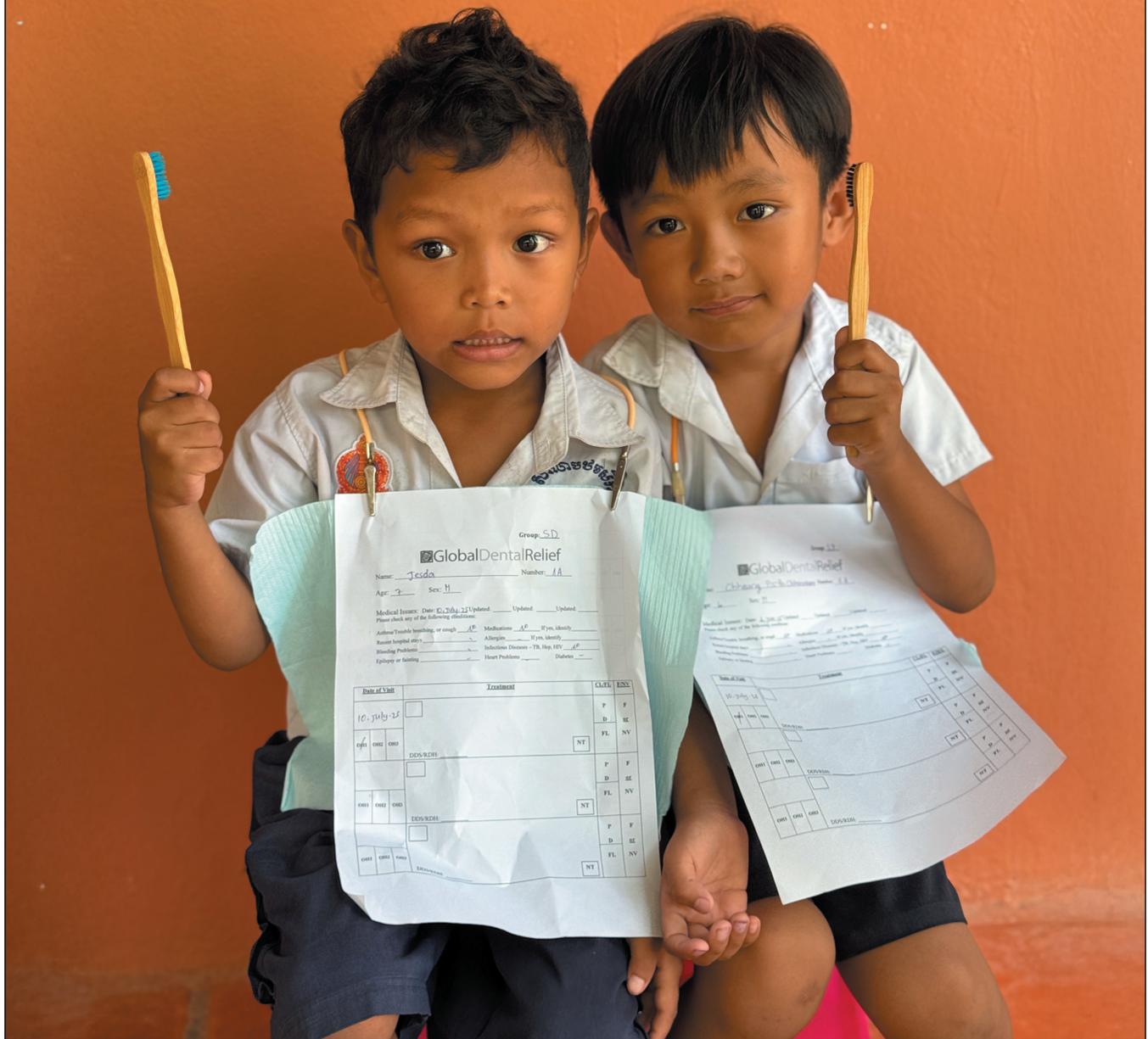


# Inside MDRT

How MDRT is working for you

## Cure for pain

Global Dental Relief provides service opportunities for kids previously lacking in care.



MDRT Foundation ♦ Centennial Anniversary ♦ In Memoriam



**H**ave you ever seen a child embrace their dentist after an appointment? Probably not.

Yet Kim Troggio has witnessed this scene so many times she can't put a number to it.

"The kid pops out of the chair, even after a really hard extraction, and hugs the dentist and thanks them," said the co-founder and director of Global Dental Relief (GDR), which received a \$15,000 grant from the MDRT Foundation in 2025. "They know they're out of pain and won't hurt anymore, and it's really transformative."

GDR has helped more than 280,000 children around the world receive dental care since its founding in 2001. And while the organization's growth has been steady and incredibly impactful, it wasn't easy.

### **Ambitious beginnings**

While some innovators testing an idea might explore the simplest possible execution, Troggio and co-founder Laurie Mathews, a former director of Colorado State

Parks, are not those people. The United States-born friends were both working in Nepal and saw the enormous need for dental care. Many families there struggle daily just to acquire enough food, so items like toothbrushes and toothpaste are a luxury. Even those with financial means have little access to dentists.

At the time, Mathews' dentist husband was offering free treatment, so Troggio, a trekking guide, proposed helping those farthest away from dental care by setting up a clinic at one of the grade schools established by renowned adventurer Sir Edmund Hillary halfway up Mount Everest at more than 13,000 feet.

"It didn't seem that extreme; it was just part of our lifestyle," said Troggio, who already had the necessary knowledge about sherpa guides and drivers for the yaks who would carry equipment and supplies on the three-day trek.

Though the clinic helped about 500 kids over eight days, Troggio and Mathews recognized that they ▶

**Global Dental Relief (GDR) clinics are staffed by five to seven experienced volunteer dental professionals and eight to 10 general volunteers.**

were asking too much of their volunteers and encountering challenges from elevation, securing fuel for generators and more. But the friends also despaired about kids whose pain likely would recur if they go without future care for untreated cavities and other oral issues.

So, they started imagining what it would look like to commit to routinely seeing the same patients in a setting that wasn't so physically taxing for volunteers.

### **Streamlining and expanding**

For three years, they developed clinics and a replicable operation in Nepal's capital of Kathmandu, expanding to Vietnam and a very northern part of the Indian Himalayas in 2004 and Guatemala in 2007. Cambodia and Kenya followed in 2013, with Mexico added in 2019.

GDR now hosts nearly 30 weeklong clinics each year, rotating every 18 months. Each clinic is run by five to seven experienced volunteer dental professionals and eight to 10 general volunteers. All volunteers cover their own travel, lodging and food costs. Every year, up to 25,000 children ages 6 to 18 benefit from these clinics.



**GDR has helped more than 280,000 children around the world receive dental care since its founding in 2001.**

“We never intended to grow to the size we are now,” said Troggio, emphasizing the act of simply matching services with need. “Children don’t necessarily complain beforehand, but when we see them come back for their second or third visit, they are thriving, taller, stronger and healthier.”

Kids are often afraid to come to a clinic, Troggio says, but after their friends go and come back free of pain and able to eat, sleep and concentrate in school, those kids are no longer scared.

### **Making an impact**

When **William A. Magnusson, MBA, CFP**, a 26-year MDRT member, first heard about GDR from fellow Rotary Club members, he was experiencing his own dental pain after an old root canal flared up. It taught Magnusson, who endorsed the MDRT Foundation grant, that dental pain is uniquely uncomfortable, and the importance of providing support to those who need relief.

“People are born into situations not of their making,” said Magnusson, whose own pain was alleviated by an endodontist. “It’s our job to use our time, talent and money to help others, as well as ourselves.”

The 2025 MDRT Foundation grant helped fund two clinics in Mexico and Cambodia, resulting in 2,370 kids receiving treatment. This is in



**GDR hosts 30 weeklong dental clinics each year, which service up to 25,000 children between the ages of 6 and 18.**

addition to a \$10,000 MDRT Foundation grant in 2023 that sponsored two clinics in Cambodia, helping 1,777 children receive care.

At each clinic (where a local partner coordinates with schools to determine who will be coming in), kids receive palliative, restorative and preventative care. That means exams, cleaning, and restorations and extractions as needed, plus fluoride treatment and a new toothbrush.

“It’s profound that over a three-year period, a child can go from having a mouth full of decay and infection to literally not needing anything but a small cleaning,” Troggio said, adding that as kids get older, they sometimes become assistants in the clinic. GDR has put at least five Nepali people through dental school and two through nursing school.

Want to get involved? Troggio says not to feel self-conscious about traveling alone, as she has seen countless volunteers, united by wanting to help kids, become lifelong friends. The majority return to volunteer again in another GDR clinic. Regardless, the mission is simple, and the benefits are massive for all involved.

“In the end, it’s really not about me, it’s about providing a brighter future for these children,” Troggio said when asked why she does this work. “Seeing the profound difference dental care can make in a child’s life — there is no better feeling than knowing that a kid who came into the clinic in pain will be able to sleep tonight because of the care they received in our clinic.” ☀

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**At each clinic, children can receive dental exams, cleaning, restorations, extractions, fluoride treatment and toothbrushes.**

