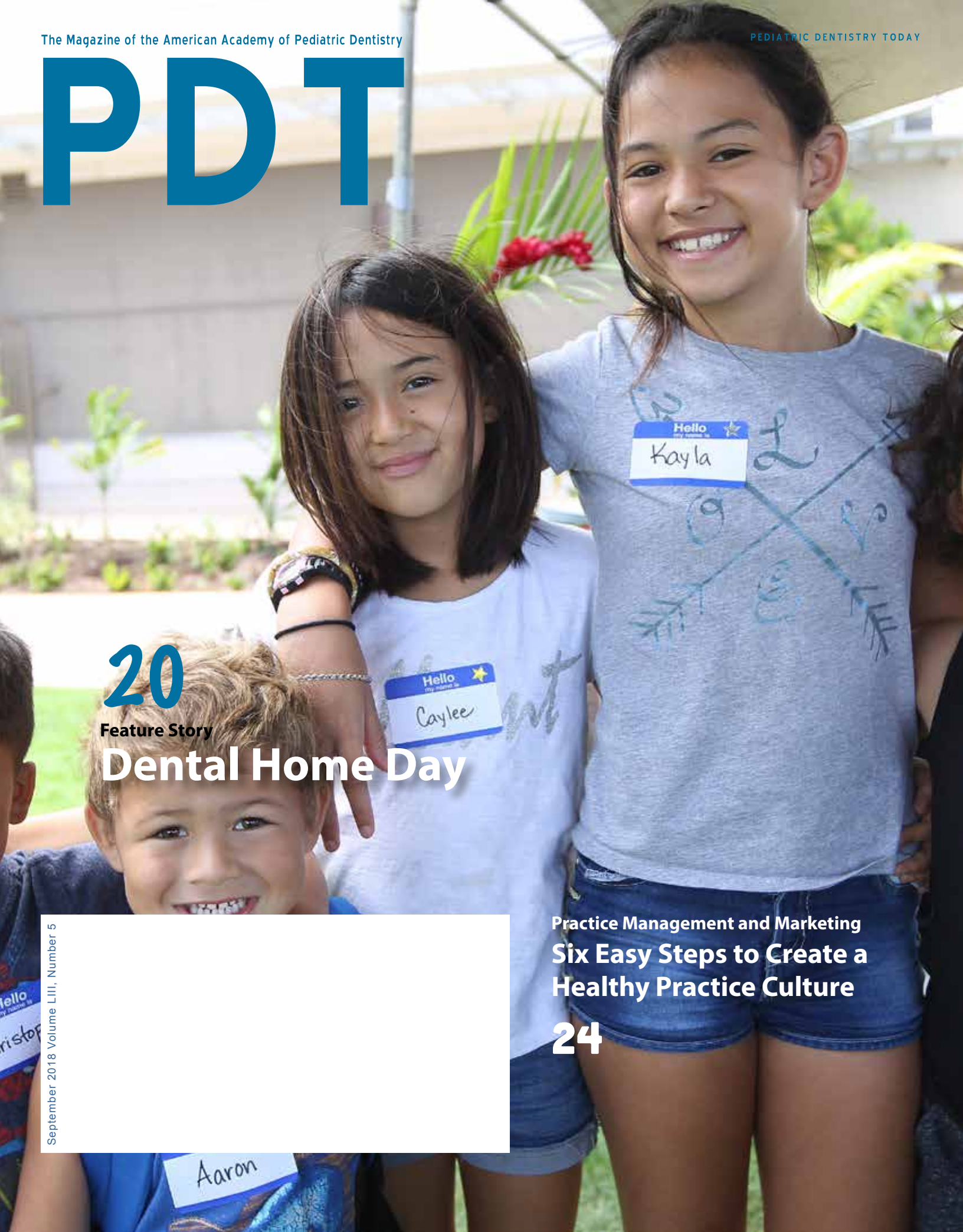


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Hello
my name is
ristor

Aaron

Volunteering in a Field Dental Clinic in Cambodia

By Kim Troggio and Will Mateo

It was a sun-drenched, 80-degree winter day in Siem Reap, Cambodia, when I sat down with AAPD member Nick Lombardozi, D.D.S., a pediatric dentist from Midlothian, Va. Tanned and smiling, Lombardozi spoke with the slow, contented cadence of someone who had recently completed a job both taxing and deeply satisfying.

Lombardozi hadn't traveled to this particular corner of paradise to enjoy a leisurely vacation consisting of margaritas and long naps. He was in Cambodia with a greater purpose in mind.

His mission: Lombardozi worked out of a temporary dental clinic to provide comprehensive dental care to impoverished children from the Cambodian countryside. Alongside a team of five other dentists, a hygienist, and a handful of non-specialized volunteers, he and the rest of the team spent a week giving dental exams, cleanings, restorations and extractions to 700 children with no other access to care.

Lombardozi's team volunteered with Global Dental Relief (GDR), a charity that brings dental care to children in five countries across the globe. Since 2001, Global Dental Relief volunteers have treated over 155,000 children. This work combines the opportunity to do immense good for children in need, with cultural excursions that immerse volunteers in the host culture and local sights.

Prior to his travel with Global Dental Relief, Lombardozi had not traveled much beyond a two hour trip to the beach. Any anxiety he had about his first service trip to Guatemala in 2012 was immediately put to rest by what he describes as the superb leadership of the group. Every Global Dental Relief trip is overseen by two seasoned leaders who travel, live and work with the volunteers for the duration of their stay abroad.

Lombardozi's current trip to Cambodia is his third with Global Dental Relief. In addition to Cambodia and Guatemala, he volunteered in Ladakh, India. Ladakh is a far-northern, Himalayan region of India that is home to the world's largest group of Tibetans in exile. It is a fascinating mix of Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim culture, living in this rugged area under towering mountain ranges.

Global Dental Relief hosts 22 clinics a year in Nepal, India, Kenya, Cambodia and Guatemala. All dental equipment and supplies are provided, volunteers only need to bring their enthusiasm and open hearts to the clinic. GDR project leaders fly in a few days before the dentists to set up the clinic and ensure populations of children are ready to be seen. The result is a well-oiled machine, in which 100 plus children receive complete dental care each day. After a week of hard work and many smiles, volunteers who arrived strangers, are now lifelong friends, connected by their common mission to help children live happier, healthier lives.

What Lombardozi loves most about volunteering is the very special camaraderie that emerges on each team. He says, "It's a certain type of person who volunteers to bring their skills to far-flung corners of the globe." People like Lombardozi and his fellow volunteers have a deep well of compassion and a healthy sense of adventure. He says that he is constantly struck not just by the quality of his fellow volunteers, but by how warm, welcoming and good-natured local people are everywhere that he has traveled with Global Dental Relief.

In addition, it is the immense need of the kids that motivates Lombardozi to volunteer time and again. He explains, "You see things you don't see at home—bombed out molars and infections are the rule, not the exception." He tells the story of Sukong, a boy he had just finished treating. Practically every tooth in Sukong's head was heavily decayed,



yet the boy kept great cheer throughout his extensive treatment. "He always had a smile of gratitude on his face," Lombardozi explains. "Ten years from now, I'll still have that image in my mind." In just two visits, Sukong made the transition from longstanding chronic infection to good dental health.

Lombardozi says he too has been transformed by this work. "When you perform work that is both so necessary and fulfilling," he says, "volunteering quickly becomes part of who you are." He explains that, "volunteering with such high-need populations, you just want to take care of the kids as best you can—it's the only thing on your mind."

Many more children remain to benefit from Lombardozi's compassionate and experienced hands in the future—he is headed to Kenya with GDR this month to serve children—he says his only regret is not having started this work when he was even younger. "It's made me more complete," he said leaning back with a tired, yet deeply contented smile.

Join us and see the world as you've never seen it before! You don't have to be a dentist to volunteer!

For more information on volunteer opportunities visit the Global Dental Relief website at: www.globaldentalrelief.org, email: volunteer@globaldentalrelief.org or call (303) 858-8857.