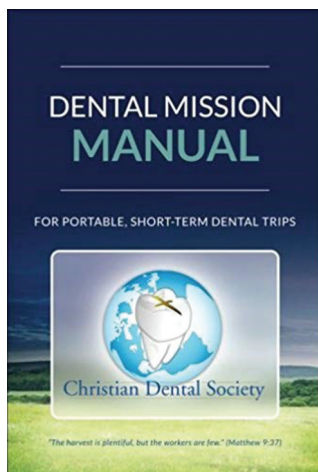


Missions with a legacy investment



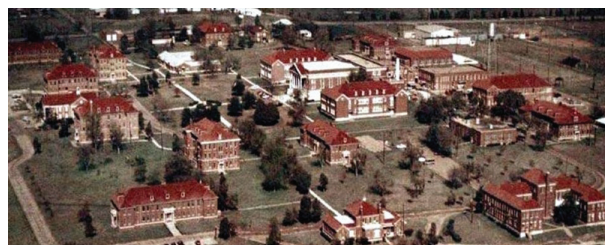
Most mission trips do not start out to be 43 years in the initial planning for longevity nor did the Dr. T. Bob Davis student dental mission trip now serving its 43rd annual site. It was to be a 1-time trip to help kick start others to follow. Instead, it became a 34-year annual trip to Matamoros, Mexico, 1 year to Nicaragua and 9 years to Guatemala, with one 2-week trip to India worked into the 42nd year. So, do not under plan when starting your first dental mission trip. Keep in mind that it may capture your heart and soul by generating such enthusiasm that you must return. Some groups even go multiple times in a year! Some go to the same location, others to multiple locations.



Dental Mission Manual – For Portable, Short-Term Dental Trips.

One would ask “how do you start such a process?” The answer is simple. Make a commitment to not give up. Then get a copy of the Academy of Dentistry International (ADI) Fellow Dr. Bob Meyer’s landmark text on dental missions, “Dental Mission Manual – For Portable, Short-Term Dental Trips.” That is the definitive handbook on what you will need to know all in one volume! From there, you will be ready to start planning your own trip, to join someone who is already taking trips, to go to a local, state or national group dental charity project or to travel to an international site that is already set up.

This article will detail the progress of one dentist who stuck to the idea that you can make a difference in our world when you care for those less fortunate in your own local area or as far away as half-way around the world. For Dr. T. Bob it began 47 years ago.



Buckner Children’s Home in the 1960’s.

As a young dentist in general practice in Dallas, Texas, USA, Dr. T. Bob Davis saw a need at a local children’s home where 400 children from broken homes lived at Buckner Children’s Home. He “borrowed” the Baylor Dental School for one Saturday, gathered ten dentists and 40 hygienists/assistants/helpers as volunteers to take full mouth X-rays, examine, provide a cleaning appointment, give oral hygiene instructions and send them home with a new toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss. On finishing the day’s work, he collated (over a period of 3 months) the chartings of findings correlated to the child’s X-rays. That resulted in a statistical analysis of what was needed to take care of that population each 6 months. On presentation to the Buckner administration, a plan was offered to set up in a 2nd-floor building on campus a 2-chair dental clinic complete with X-rays, sterilization, and needed equipment/supplies. Those were donated primarily by T. Bob as he was remodeling his private office along with other generous donors. A young dentist was hired along with a young hygienist to work 1 day a week to accomplish the needed care, which the administration gladly paid for. That program served the Buckner Children’s Home for the decades following until they no longer kept children on campus. Many children from the Vietnam War were cared for in that home.



Dallas Juvenile Justice Center.

A side effect was later provided when T. Bob discovered that the Dallas Juvenile Justice Center had no provision for dental care on site, rather taking the juveniles sometimes in handcuffs to private dental offices for crisis dental issues, with no regular care offered. With T. Bob's guidance, a room in the highly secure compound was designated for dental care. Again, with donations from T. Bob and generous other dentists, a small dental program was set up that took care of hundreds of students for years.

With time the Juvenile Justice Center relocated to a brand-new campus away from the Parkland Hospital district. Again T. Bob offered them a plan to build within the next new building a 5-chair new dental clinic that would provide routine care on a planned basis for all inmates on that campus plus a number of others in remote juvenile facilities throughout the county that were in need of such care. The plan was proposed in 1999 and completed in 2001, scaled down to only three chairs but adequate to the need of thousands of inmates who process through each year. The proposal included getting the Baylor College of Dentistry to send a professor and students to the facility on a routine weekly basis. Dr. Dan Jones, Director of the dental school's public health department, arranged that and it is ongoing to this day.

Another side benefit of that interaction was the connection T. Bob provided between the Juvenile Justice Center and the Buckner Children's Home. T. Bob noticed that some of the young juveniles were not bad offenders but rather had made a mistake that landed them in Justice Center for a brief time. These children in T. Bob's opinion did not need to be mixed in with the murderers and violent offenders. Thus, with the Juvenile Justice Center's Director and a Dallas Judge who oversaw the Center T. Bob took them to the Buckner administration with an offer to house those non-violent offenders in a temporary setting within the Buckner campus in an old dorm that was not being used. It was renovated for that purpose and later another dorm became a 24 hour lock-down facility for drug offender children with 8 hour staff shifts.



Happy Hill Farm.

As these were being implemented, a children's home some 2 hours away, south of Dallas/Fort Worth, heard of what T. Bob

had done and asked for help in establishing a dental room in one of their houses. He took his wife and three young children for a visit and while there planned the new dental room with donated older equipment. This facility has from inception been a favorite charity of the world's largest (most profitable and well known) football franchise, the Dallas Cowboys! Friends of T. Bob have provided the dental care for those children within the Happy Hills Farm campus for decades.



T. Bob in Matamoros, Mexico Children's Home Clinic.



Jeff Fleming and T. Bob on Mexico Mission Trip.

All the while beginning in 1977, T. Bob went to Matamoros, Mexico with a physician friend to provide dental care for 2 days on a weekend at an upstart children's home across the border from Brownsville, Texas, sponsored primarily by churches in the area. With a group of five to start, MD, DMD, hygienist, assistant and translator, the group enlarged for 5 years of consistent service on one weekend a year. In 1982, a freshman dental student (Jeff Fleming) requested to bring six of his friends along and the pattern was set to invite dental and dental hygiene students to join in on the weekend 2-h flight from Dallas. Over the next 29 years, the group swelled to as many as over 100 with 115 being the largest. That year there were 11 pre-dental students, most of whom became dentists later. When pre-dental students observe the high

impact of dental personnel, they are highly motivated to go to dental school for a career. Most dentists are givers and not just takers.



2011 Nicaragua Mission Trip Group.



2012 T. Bob's and Dr. Kevin Seidler's ServingHIM Group.

In the real world, politics can affect the charitable efforts of international service. The Mexican Cartels with such horrible human rights violations made it impossible to be safe in that area. Thus, the trip went to Nicaragua for a week that next year and on to Guatemala for a week each year since. With a high of 89 teammates within the past 9 years, the trip has attracted the assistance of an exceptional world-class Guatemalan Dental School, the University of Francisco Marroquin in Guatemala City. In 2019, a total of over 50 of their students and faculty joined the mission trip for a day at the time. Their enthusiasm has been refreshing. Former founder and Dean Dr. Ramiro Alfaro (Founding Central American ADI Regent) had been a strong encourager of that work and ADI fellow/new dean Dr. Estuardo Mata is following up with a new group of energetic faculty under the hands-on leadership of ADI Fellow (and Central American Regent) Dr. Estuardo Zachrisson. As a result, the fellows in Guatemala have sought chapter status in ADI.



Dr. T. Bob and Dr. Zachrisson, 2013 GUA group.



2017 GUA Mission Trip Group Leadership.

From left to right, front row, Dr. Mata, Dr. Alfaro, Dr. T. Bob, Dr. Shade, Dr. Meyer, Dr. Yarbrow, Dr. Nix, Dr. Zachrisson. From Left to Right, Back Row, Dr. Luan, Dr. Nuyens, Dr. Sperry, Dr. Murphey, Dr. Suarez.

To expand the outreach to the “ends of the earth,” T. Bob led a group of seven professionals/dental personnel to Ukhrul, India, during July 2018 where 300 patients were seen and a brief visit lunchtime to a leading dental school in Delhi, Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences. Portable dental care was demonstrated to some of the faculty and staff who have a robust mobile dental care program. Hosted by ADI Fellow, Dean and School Director Dr. Mahesh Verma, a tour of the school reminded the visitors of the wonderful impact in dental health being provided there. When the guests are in an international setting, it is always a privilege to bring with you something of great value added to the dental care component. This trip was a baby grand piano for a large church in the mountain town of Ukhrul that was shipped by air freight, train, and pick-up truck through the monsoon season. Donated by pediatric dentist Dr. Glen Ginter of Katy, Texas, USA, a world-class piano executive (Maestro Bruno Santo of Dallas, Texas, USA) arranged the entire piano transfer.



T. Bob Davis in concert on baby grand piano.



Dr. T. Bob, Dr. and Mrs. Meyer with Dr. Verma.



Dr. Verma and staff with T. Bob's team.

A highlight of the arrival of the piano was a piano concert by T. Bob just before he drove out to fly back to the USA. Their previous upright piano was 100 years old and no longer playable. Pianos can last 100 years if maintained. This is a gift of a lifetime and will provide for many students to learn on a grand piano as well as many to perform routinely on it. Culturally, we as dentists

can make huge contributions along the way as we not only provide dental care but other items of great value to the local population. A similar donation is in the works for the summer of 2020 in Romania, where T. Bob will provide another grand piano with concerts and dental care. Dr. Kevin Seidler is the founder and president of ServingHIM, the organization that has a long-term presence for dental/medical care there. Sustainability is a keyword in the Global Dental Care Community as promoted by FDI. These organizations lead the way in providing such strong long-term relationships.



Dallas Life.

Another local mission, the Downtown Dallas Life Homeless Shelter that started with 500 beds, was the recipient of T. Bob's planning for a dental presence some 20 years ago when he donated and got colleagues to donate a full dental clinic for a large room in the middle of the first floor. Today that clinic has been upgraded to a new three chair suite with a nomad hand-held X-ray, all due to an anonymous donor. This has set the stage for a huge new project T. Bob has embarked on to provide emergency dental full-time care for not only the homeless but also for indigents who seek care at local hospital emergency rooms (where there is no restorative or curative dental care available due to hospital limitations). Millions of US Dollars are spent in hospital emergency rooms on people seeking emergency dental care, but who only get a quick look, maybe a pain pill and/or antibiotic (which generally are not indicated dentally) plus a recommendation for the patient to find a dentist outside the hospital the next day. This also will complement the US Government's strong approach toward solving the opioid crisis, which was partly being fueled by dental care failure.

Hence, when taken as a whole, the view of the life of one dentist, solo private general practitioner, has allowed much in the way of sharing charitably with those who are not a part of the dental care routine system. From local to national to international impact, one person has shown how it can be done, clearly demonstrating that any dentist can consider

sharing from the bounty of their daily work. It is not rocket science but, in fact, they are good old common-sense solutions to society-wide issues of lack of dental health. All dentists can be a part of the solution. All dental organizations can support such altruism and dedication to fellow human beings. Based on many parameters, even the USA news media recognizes the value of dentists in the economy. Notice that in 2017 even U.S. NEWS and World Report recognized dentistry as the top job/best job in the USA!! Our profession is held in high esteem.



ADA News publication of U.S News and World Report 2017 Best Jobs.

All dental manufacturers and suppliers can be a huge part of this solution everywhere, just as they have participated in T. Bob's successes, having often contributed thousands of dollars of equipment and supplies yearly to see these programs become reality! Patterson and Schein as well as most all other large suppliers have been generous and gracious when asked. They have gone out of their way to make things happen. The dental profession has a great debt of gratitude to most of the largest and smallest of dental suppliers who so unselfishly contributed through the years to individual charity projects just as those mentioned above.

In summary, this article is written as a challenge to all who will read and comprehend the possibility for their own lives in the area of volunteering. Organizations such as ADI, ICD, PFA, AGD, ADA, FDI, and numerous others support and recommend volunteering, locally, nationally, and internationally. The joys of such altruism are huge and in themselves are the reward for volunteerism. Self-esteem is a byproduct of our doing for others out of the bounty of our skills and labor. That makes for some thankful people who have been served and some really happy people who rest in peace at night after having volunteered in any of these venues! Try it, you'll love it!

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