

Dr. Izchak Barzilay leads the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation on its clinical outreach trip to Uganda in 2019



Most recently, the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation – one of Canada’s newest dental charitable organization (founded in 2018 and achieving Canadian charitable status in 2019) spent 2 weeks in Southern Uganda collaborating with KIHEFO. The Foundation seeks to change the way that dental outreach is conducted globally. The groundwork of Build Your Smile Dental Foundation was laid by Dr. Izchak Barzilay following several years of participation on international outreach dental trips to Costa Rica and Uganda. It was on these trips that he recognized that quality dental care should not be a luxury to the lucky few who can afford it – dental care is a basic human right. It is this very mission that sparked the creation of the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation and the way in which it structures its programming.

2018–2019 was a time of tremendous growth and expansion in the delivery of care at Build Your Smile. The premier editions of the International Dental Symposium were held in Uganda. The symposia brought together professors and educators from Canada and the United States to Makerere University in Kampala and to KIHEFO in Kabale, Uganda, to educate dental professionals on global standards of care and technology, which they may not have otherwise had access to. The year 2019 also saw the inaugural iteration of Build Your Smile Dental Foundation’s flagship program: The Clinical Outreach Trip. A team of 20 volunteers was assembled – comprised dentists, specialists, denturists, technicians, hygienists, assistants, administrative staff, and dental students. Together, they traveled to the Kabale region of Southwestern Uganda to deliver critical dental care in partnership with a local NGO, KIHEFO. The program was expanded beyond the customary emergency and preventative care and into prosthodontics and various levels of implant dentistry. In addition to the support given to the Kabale region, a small team departed to the Nakivale Refugee Camp to assess the demand and treat those in need of dental care who, through no fault of their own, reside in this UN-based refugee settlement.

Over the course of eight clinical days, over 3000 patients were seen, and services performed included:

- 1022 extractions
- 2300 fluoride treatments
- 90 dentures made and delivered
- 7 implants placed
- 5 bone grafts
- 130 hygiene patients and over 100 restorative patients.

What separates the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation from other dental charities in the field is the commitment

to education and sustainability. Education workshops and training are provided for local dental professionals both in the field and in an in-class format. In addition, an academic scholarship program has been established where one student is selected annually to receive a full-ride scholarship to their dental officer college training in Uganda. The foundation’s ultimate goal is to make themselves obsolete in the communities that they serve through training and skills development.

The Build Your Smile Dental Foundation is also committed to education in our home communities, with partnerships being forged with dental schools, hygiene programs, denturism and technology programs, as well as other training programs across North America. Students play a key role in the outreach trips, bringing enthusiasm, energy, and a sense of excitement that fuels the work that is done on the ground – and at the same time gain a wealth of experience and confidence from their interactions with patients around the world.

The work that is being done closer to home is by no means less impressive. As reported the past year, an official partnership has been established with a Toronto-based women’s shelter, Street Haven at the Crossroads. Full dental and prosthodontic care is provided to the women in Street Haven’s care as they prepare to reintegrate into the workforce and into their communities. These women come from a variety of backgrounds including women afflicted with addiction and mental health disorders, victims of domestic violence, former sex workers, and women released from incarceration. By restoring their smiles, they are provided with a new lease on life and a renewed sense of confidence. The services offered to these women at no cost to them whatsoever include emergency care, restorations, hygiene, periodontal services, oral surgery, and missing tooth replacement.

The Build Your Smile Dental Foundation has also been privileged to work with the Holocaust Survivors Oral Health Program. Full dental care is provided to Toronto-based survivors of the Holocaust, enabling them to age with dignity, enhance their dental function, and improve their quality of life.

Beginning with the second annual Clinical Outreach trip to Uganda and another edition of the International Dental Symposium in January 2020 presents an exciting new year for the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation. Programming will be expanded into other vulnerable communities in Africa, Asia, and the Americas to address dental care at every stage of life, from pediatric to senior care. The commitment to



accessible dental care will also be extended into more locally based communities in need across Ontario and Canada.

It is through the continued efforts of the volunteers who help at home and abroad at their own personal expense that we are able to support the communities that we serve. It is through partnerships with academic institutions (University of Toronto), the Academy of Prosthodontics Foundation and Global Outreach Program, the Prosthodontic Foundation (APS), their suppliers, colleagues, and all those with similar visions that they can achieve their goals and continually raise the bar of what is possible in field dentistry and prosthodontics.

...because smiles have no borders.

For more information about the Build Your Smile Dental Foundation, to volunteer, or to make a donation please visit www.buildyoursmile.org.

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