

Initiating change, one smile at a time



A Not for Profit Initiative Delivers Dental Care to a Vulnerable Female Population in Toronto. Phoenix Smiles was founded by a team of Toronto based dental professionals who participate in annual dental and medical outreach missions to rural areas of Uganda. In the spirit of dental volunteerism, the team (Prosthodontic Associates) recognizes that effective outreach begins in one's own community, and hence, the Phoenix Smiles initiative was born.

Too often, people of Toronto, particularly the vulnerable populations, due to economic and causal circumstances are unable to afford basic dental care and often lack dental health education and awareness. The main goal of the initiative is to provide critical dental services to a local vulnerable female population.

Phoenix Smiles initiated and established partnerships with two supportive housing facilities -Street Haven at the Cross Roads, an emergency shelter for homeless women, as well as The Grant House - a residential treatment center for women afflicted with addiction.

Residents are mainly homeless women, victims of domestic violence, addiction and mental health disorders sufferers, former sex workers, and women released from incarceration. As a direct result of lifestyle factors, substance abuse, poor nutrition, inadequate oral hygiene, violence, and poverty - dental disease, mouth and facial pain, oral infections, and tooth loss are prominent.

The aim of the initiative is to improve dental awareness, provide dental care (at no cost) and recreate smiles to aid in re-entry into the workforce and community. Dentistry offered includes

emergency care (trauma, infection, and pain control) restorations, periodontal services, oral surgery and missing tooth replacement (dental implants or dentures), as well as oral hygiene instructions, smoking cessation support, and nutritional counseling.

The Phoenix team operates out of a multidisciplinary dental specialty practice in Toronto - Prosthodontic Associates. Led by Dr. Izchak Barzilay, the team is comprised of dental professionals in various roles who volunteer their time and expertise.

To ensure the utmost comfort and anonymity of the patients treated, the Phoenix team operates outside of regular business hours, evenings, and weekends.

Research and data collection results show a direct correlation between ideal oral health and overall physical and psychosocial well-being. At baseline, 83.33% of women were "very dissatisfied" with the appearance and function of their teeth. Post-treatment 100% reported to be "very satisfied."

Providing dental services which have an immediate impact on function and esthetics, otherwise unattainable to the women served by the Phoenix team, improves the ability to eat, speak, and smile, builds confidence and self-esteem, offers hope and supports the ability to re-enter the workforce and, in turn, recreates lives.

As of late Phoenix Smiles now functions under the umbrella of Build Your Smile Dental Foundation which covers the various volunteer efforts spearheaded by the people at Prosthodontic Associates. Dentists, assistants, hygienists, and others all support the treatment of this vulnerable population.

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