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## **OPERATION SMILE DENTAL MISSION TO TAKE PLACE IN VIETNAM, FROM MARCH 19-29, 2008**

*Teams of U.S. Dental Volunteers & Vietnamese Counterparts to Provide Free Dental  
Care for Children in Hanoi and Hue*

**NORFOLK, VA** – From March 19-29, 2008, an Operation Smile team of 33 general dentists, pediatric dentists, orthodontists, oral surgeons, endodontists, dental hygienists and University of Maryland dental student volunteers will travel to Vietnam to embark on the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Operation Smile Vietnam Dental Mission. These volunteers, from **Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Vermont**, will provide education and dental treatment to thousands of children and young adults. This mission also offers training opportunities, as U.S. dental volunteers provide Vietnamese dental professionals with hands-on education through lecture and clinical treatment.

One team will work in Hanoi at the Hanoi Medical School. In Hue, volunteers will work at the Operation Smile Comprehensive Care Center within the Hue Odonto-Stomatological Hospital, while additional team members will travel in three fully equipped dental vans, owned by P/S, an oral care brand of Unilever Vietnam, which has established the “Protect Vietnamese Smile Program.” Team hygienists will travel with the vans to schools in order to teach children proper brushing techniques and gum care.

One of the team leaders, Dr. Daniel Taub of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, said, “I learn something new from our Vietnamese doctors every time I return. This will be my thirteenth trip, and I have seen challenges overcome and an incredible thirst for knowledge from our Vietnamese counterparts. I truly love the experience Operation Smile has allowed me to create and participate in.”

Dr. D. Michael Gioffre Jr., a General Dentist in Wilmington, Delaware, has volunteered on 10 Operation Smile Vietnam Dental Missions and will also serve as a Team Leader this year. Dr. Gioffre said, “Every year it is easy to get caught up with the feeling that you need to treat every child. This while ambitious is unrealistic. Education is the formula for success and that is where our focus remains. We educate patients, the children and young adults, on proper oral hygiene,

diet and nutrition. We hold an educational symposium with our Vietnamese colleagues and counterparts to discuss various topics related to Dentistry.”

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*Vietnam Dental Mission, page 2*

During the 2007 dental mission, Operation Smile volunteers worked in Hanoi and Hue and treated more than 2,000 patients. Each child was given a dental hygiene kit, donated by P/S, containing toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste. Vietnamese dental professionals attended a series of lectures given by the Operation Smile team members and local dentists. Since 1995, nearly 11,500 patients have received dental treatment during Operation Smile Vietnam dental missions.

The Vietnam dental mission program began in 1995, when a group of faculty and students from the University of Maryland’s Dental School wanted to help children across the world and also share their knowledge and skills with their Vietnamese counterparts. The group was led by dental student Bill Magee III, son of Operation Smile Co-founders Dr. Bill and Kathy Magee. The mission has since grown to three sites and treats thousands of children each year. During the mission, each Operation Smile team member is paired with his/her Vietnamese counterpart allowing them to build bonds, share experiences and differences in methods of practicing.

**About Operation Smile ([www.operationssmile.org](http://www.operationssmile.org))**

Founded in 1982, Operation Smile, headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia, is a worldwide children’s medical charity whose network of global volunteers are dedicated to helping improve the health and lives of children and young adults. Since its founding, Operation Smile volunteers have treated more than 115,000 children born with cleft lips, cleft palates and other facial deformities. In addition to contributing free medical treatment, Operation Smile trains local medical professionals in its 26 partner countries and leaves behind crucial equipment to lay the groundwork for long-term self-sufficiency.

**Media Notes:** To receive images or additional information, or to request an interview with an Operation Smile spokesperson, please contact Lisa Jones at [ljones@operationssmile.org](mailto:ljones@operationssmile.org) or 757-321-3252.

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