

# Thousand Smiles Jamaican Dental Project 2006

Annual Report

## **A history-making collaboration between Great Shape! Inc., International Smile Power Foundation, Sandals Resorts International and Jamaican Ministry of Health**

The 1000 Smiles Project broke all the records in 2006. 100 volunteers came from 4 countries to serve some 9,000 Jamaicans. In just 4 short years, this remarkable act of collective heroism has become the world's largest international humanitarian dental project.

What does "collective heroism" mean? Hundreds of individuals played a part, some small and some very large. They relieved and prevented suffering while improving the lives of thousands of Jamaicans. No part was insignificant.

### **The Work**

The project lasted 7 weeks across two separate regions of Jamaica. Session one in St. Ann Parish had clinics in Exchange, Sandals Grande Ocho Rios (staff) and at Walkerswood All-Age School. In Hanover Parish, the clinics set up in Askenish, Cave Valley, Lucea and Negril Gardens (staff). Our volunteers worked exceptionally hard, often in hot and crowded conditions. They cared for about 2000 always grateful patients (including 550 Sandals staff) between both parishes. They offered cleanings, extractions, fillings, sealants, fluoride treatments, root canals and more.

Each session had an education team that traveled throughout the rural parts of the parishes. They provided dental hygiene education and passed out brushes and paste. The volunteers taught over 7,000 children at about 35 schools. The education team is critical to the overall efforts of the project. The goal is to educate in prevention. We want the younger population to avoid the severity of advanced tooth decay found in so many adult Jamaicans today.

### **New In 2006**

Two new significant developments proved successful in 2006: 1) An experimental upgrade in dental equipment. 2) Clinics that served "children only".

1). Scott Ellis from Patterson Dental, donated chairs and lights and assembled a 3 chair clinic with real dental equipment. In general, this new equipment performed much better than our portable gear. This "experiment" went well enough to expand the system to at least one more clinic in each Parish. With a little creativity, elbow grease and some expert coaching from Scott, we learned how to set up (and break down) a real dental office in a couple hours time. We are now able to make portable an otherwise permanent dental office. This makes procedures like sectioning a tooth much more efficient and easier on our volunteers.

2). During the "off season" of last year, Dr. Sherwin Shinn and I strategized to make our important work in Jamaica more sustainable. Each year we go to Jamaica and pull many teeth. While this is very important work, we want to make more of a long-term difference in the overall oral health in the communities we serve. With the guidance and permission from the Jamaican Ministry of Health, we chose two sites (Walkerswood and Cave Valley) to be "Child Only" clinics. Additionally, instead of limiting each patient just one procedure, we treated the entire mouth of each child. The goal of this strategy is simple: to permanently improve the oral health of an entire community by addressing the roots of the problem in the youngest possible children. Through education, prevention and restorative care over a 3-5 year period, an entire generation of children will grow up with healthy teeth and gums. This new program was successful beyond our imagination. We saw almost every single child (500 total) between grades 1-7 in two separate schools. In addition, the number of procedures completed increased dramatically over the adult clinics. Most kids would come in, get a cleaning, move to the next chair for sealants, move again to get a filling and finally move again if a tooth required an extraction. Sometimes, kids had to come back more than one day. In all, volunteers sealed over 2000 teeth in this new program.

This element of our project now completes a 4 pronged approach to sustainability:

1. Child Only clinics
2. Sealants (preventing tooth decay in molars)
3. Education and distribution of toothbrushes and paste
4. Supporting the local Ministry of Health dental professionals with supplies, equipment, repairs and training

### **Publicity Blitz**

We placed a great emphasis on earning publicity for the project this year. And for good reason: Sandals Resorts International deserves a hero's applause for believing in and supporting our work. This company truly cares about Jamaica, its people, and especially its staff. I am pleased to say that with the professional direction of Donna Marie Brooks, Adrian Nelson, Khadine Daley of Sandals and Lucinda Kay and Rick Suhr from Great Shape, the project was covered by Jamaican television 4 separate times, newsprint at least 6 times and radio at least 8. Indeed, the story was covered by several media outlets in the US. This project simply would not be possible without the ongoing support of Sandals and a special "Big Up" (thank you) goes to managing director, Mr. Merrick Fray.

### **Collective Heroism**

A web designer in San Francisco donates countless hours of programming on our website so the dentists can have a user friendly online registration process. A chocolate maker in Ashland gives a box of chocolates for an auction because she believes in the women who organize it. A volunteer's 12 year old daughter sells dog biscuits at school to raise money. An executive at Sandals decides this project is well worth the investment and proudly sponsors the project. A dentist closes her practice for a week and brings her entire staff to Jamaica. Another dentist single handedly puts on a fundraiser in her community and raises \$8,000. A patient in Seattle doesn't know much about Jamaica or the project, but he saw the pictures from his hygienist and so he donates \$50 to take dental care to 5 kids. Although he doesn't know the names or the faces of the 5 children who will benefit in some far off country, his heart is moved with compassion knowing that 50 bucks for 5 kids anywhere is too-good a deal to pass up. I am truly humbled and honored by how many people make a progressive decision to

support this great act of love. Together, with gifts small and large too numerous to count, the dream of the world's largest international humanitarian dental project becomes a reality, right here on the beautiful island called Jamaica. Once again, my deepest respect goes out to the 100 human beings called volunteers who understand that it is in giving that we receive; that in caring for those less fortunate that we are liberated to a higher place; that in loving we are graced with life's greatest blessings.

One Love,

Joseph Wright  
Executive Director, Great Shape! Inc.