



International Partners in Health

An Enduring Alliance: NYUCD Faculty, Students Continue to Volunteer for MCW



Ever since Miracle Corners of the World (MCW)* organized its first dental outreach in August 2001, NYU dental students and faculty have been active participants in providing free dental services to patients in underserved areas of Tanzania. The first outreach mission, which served more than 200 patients at MCW's Arusha, Tanzania, Community Center¹, included Ruben Cohen, NYU College of Dentistry Class of 2002; Maia Berger, NYUCD Class of 2004; and Dr. Anthony Vernillo, Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Radiology & Medicine at NYUCD. MCW and Henry Schein Cares have subsequently supported NYU faculty and students in treating hundreds of patients each year.

Follow-up outreaches took place in August 2003 and 2004 at a regional hospital in remote, underserved Songea, Tanzania, a 15-hour bus ride southwest of Dar es Salaam. NYUCD faculty, students, and other volunteers treated over 500 patients in 2003 and 600 patients in 2004.²



In 2005, MCW built the Liana Cohen Dental Clinic on MCW's new 52-acre site in Kipera Village, Songea, Tanzania, under the direction of MCW volunteer Alfred Hanssen. By August of that year, a team including NYUCD students and faculty treated patients in the new and fully equipped clinic.³

In August 2006, the fifth outreach team treated over 400 patients in one week.⁴ The sixth outreach group undertook an expanded program in August 2007, in keeping with MCW's goals to include preventive oral hygiene education and more treatment to children in the community.⁵



The relationship between MCW and the Songea Municipal Council was formalized in 2007 through a memorandum of understanding, whereby the Liana Cohen Dental Clinic was to be managed and staffed by the Songea district, while owned and supplied by MCW. With a government-employed dental therapist posted to the Kipera clinic, MCW's vision of sustainable access to oral health care for the residents of Songea is being realized.

Accordingly, the December 2008 Songea outreach by NYUCD faculty and alumni brought treatment and community-based preventive oral hygiene education to hundreds of patients.⁶ A major goal was to work with Mr. Bilal, the dental therapist, training him on the latest techniques in restorative procedures and materials for both pediatric and adult dentistry. An electronic inventory was set up to keep track of supplies used, those needed; and expiration dates of certain restorative materials. The dental team treated 175 patients in their six days on the ground. Patients received preventive, intermediate restorative care, and extractions. In the MCW outreach programs, dental care is tailored to the individual patient. Dr. Neal Herman, Clinical Professor of Pediatric Dentistry, presented a lecture entitled "Update on Dentistry for Children at the Songea Regional Hospital," and a second lecture on "Contemporary Issues in Pediatric Dentistry" at the dental school of Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania).



In August 2009, the outreach team treated over 200 adults and children,⁷ and 15 dental textbooks were donated to the dean of the dental school in Dar es Salaam.

Dr. Walter Schneider (private practice, Colorado) worked in Songea with the MCW dental therapist for three weeks in November 2009.

Future outreaches will focus on providing training and support for the clinic's dental therapist while helping to improve the school-based preventive pediatric oral health education program.

MCW's oral healthcare program, in conjunction with its industry and academic partners, has received encouragement, endorsement, and support from Tanzania's President Jakaya Kikwete; present and past Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, Honorable Excellencies Daudi Mwakawago and Augustine Mahiga; and Tanzania's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

A 2008 memorandum of agreement between MCW and the dental school at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) in Dar es Salaam outlines a project to improve oral health care across Tanzania. As part of the agreement, in early 2009, the MUHAS School of Dentistry received new state-of-the-art equipment, including dental operatories and chairs, X-ray machines, sterilizers, compressors, dental instruments, new cabinetry, and sterilization centers. The project, along with the planned installation of a new dental lab, is valued at nearly \$2 million, representing one of the largest private donations to MUHAS to date. The memorandum of understanding also stipulates that MUHAS dental students will soon begin serving their community rotations at the MCW Liana Cohen clinic in Songea.

MCW program participants have included the following individuals:

¹ Drs. Anthony Vernillo, Mitchell Pines, Frank Andolino (orthodontist, private practice), Onir Leshem (NYUCD graduate), Ron Kumbawa (Zimbabwe), and dental student Abtin Shahriari (University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine).

² NYUCD students included Erica Barba, Daniel Kang, Michael Wilson, Brent Stanley, and Jason Horn, with NYUCD faculty Drs. Mitchell Pines, Anthony Vernillo, Brian Swann (private practitioner, Kumbawa), Anna Condoulis (MCW Board), Ogo Sow (MCW volunteer), and Shareen Mani (Henry Schein).

³ Belean Pompilia, Maria Kim, Courtney Russell, Tamiko Thompkins, and faculty Drs. Girish Shah and Mitchell Pines.

⁴ NYUCD students Noah Ariola-Tirella, Juan Carlos-Hernandez, Amita Damani, Meeta Grewal, Sung Lee Min, Clinton Timmerman, Tammy Tran, Anne Yu, and Alyssa Brown (University of Illinois), along with Drs. Girish Shah, Anthony Vernillo, Mitchell Pines, and Doug Pollack (pediatrics), and Henry Schein volunteers Keith Drayer, Jules Paoletti, and Shirley Green.

⁵ NYUCD faculty included Jill Fernandez, Drs. Amr Moursi, Brendan O'Connor, and Miriam Robbins, with NYUCD students Zhemeng Wang, Reem Hemantharaju, Sheena Lambert, Charles Roy, and David Treff.

⁶ Prof. Jill Fernandez, Drs. Sky Berdahl and Neal Herman, and Drs. Jason Horn (NYUCD alumnus, US Navy) and Ryan Horn (private practitioner, periodontics).

⁷ Prof. Jill Fernandez with Drs. Elizabeth Lee (Montefiore resident) and Patrick So (private practitioner, California, and NYU alumnus).

*About Miracle Corners of the World (MCW): MCW is a nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to empower youth to become leaders of social change. Its oral healthcare program's goal is to strengthen Tanzania's oral healthcare system through public and private sector partnerships, providing state-of-the-art dental equipment and access to oral health care expertise, www.miraclecorners.org
