

# service matters

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## RETURN TO TANZANIA

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In August 2003, an NYU College of Dentistry-led dental team paid a return visit to Tanzania in East Africa to provide care over a three-week period to hundreds of medically-indigent residents of Songea, a remote district just north of the Mozambican Border. As with our initial 2001 visit to the Tanzanian village of Arusha, our return trip was sponsored by Miracle Corners of the World (MCW), a not-for-profit community development and revitalization organization, with additional generous support provided by Henry Schein, Inc.

Our team consisted of five licensed dentists, including myself, and one recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. We were warmly welcomed by the District Commissioner of Songea, the Honorable Bertha Mende and by the Honorable Health Minister Anna Margareth Abdallah, whose office battles overwhelming odds in its efforts to oversee health care for the entire country. In Songea alone, there are only two dentists to provide care for nearly 1.2 million people, many of whom have lost relatives and friends to AIDS.



*Anna Condoulis, of NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) and an MCW board member; and George Sideris, an SCPS faculty member who helped MCW with its Tanzania outreach.*



*Participants in the Songea outreach, from left to right: A local nurse; Abtin Shaahiri, a D.D.S. student at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine; Dr. Ron Kumbawa, a student in the periodontal training program at the University of Stellenbosch in Cape Town, South Africa; Dr. Onir Leshem, NYUCD '01; a local dental assistant; a local translator; Dr. Anthony T. Vernillo; Dr. Mitchell S. Pines, NYUCD Clinical Professor of Biomaterials and Biomimetics and of General Dentistry and Management Science; Dr. Frank Andolino, an orthodontist in private practice in New York City. Not shown: Dr. David Malekela, a local dentist.*

Working in an improvised dental clinic in a nearby hospital, we treated some 450 patients, including many with multiple, decayed teeth with retained root tips and acute facial infections. Each day adults and their children formed lines outside our clinic, as word spread about free dental care.

All MCW initiatives are designed for sustainability, so it was a distinct advantage to be joined by Dr. Jo Frencken of the University of Nijmegen in The Netherlands, who is an expert in Atraumatic Restorative Treatment (ART), a technique that he has used in other impoverished countries to successfully treat minimal carious lesions without portable equipment, electricity, or anesthesia.

We began to use this technique and also taught it to Dr. David Malekela, one of the two dentists in Songea, who will subsequently train his auxiliaries. Dr. Frencken generously provided a restorative glass ionomer and our team donated several sets of

ART instruments and restorative material, important first steps in developing sustainability of our outreach.

Our next outreach to Tanzania, tentatively scheduled for August 2004, will include more dentists, especially from South Africa and Tanzania, and several NYUCD students. Going forward, we hope to reach out to additional African countries. To find out more about our work with MCW, please visit [www.miraclecorners.org](http://www.miraclecorners.org).



*A nurse collects health status questionnaires from Songea residents.*