



Operation Cleft

"Gift a smile for life"

Operation Cleft Australia is an international project of the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central Inc. District 9810 Australia



Operation Cleft Australia Foundation Inc.
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www.operationcleft.org.au

NEWSLETTER

Message From The Chair Lindsay Mackay

It's been a busy and active six months since I took up the Chair position from Vici Funnell at Operation Cleft. We now have groups of Committee members working on specific areas and also looking at new ways to engage the community and broaden our reach.

Like many deserving charities, Operation Cleft is facing significant fundraising challenges at this time. One of the many ways we are addressing these challenges is the introduction of a regular contribution program – Target 1000 Smiles. Target 1000 Smiles endeavours to seek out 1000 sponsors to come on board for just one year, donating less than a dollar a day. We hope that this simple and easy method will engage a further reach within the Operation Cleft donation community – getting friends and families involved - and assist in the facilitation and long-term sustainability of Operation Cleft changing lives in Bangladesh.

Other fundraising endeavours we have now put into place include an arrangement with Grassrootz – a specific, not-for-profit fundraising platform that works both online and on mobile devices. As an alternative to PayPal, Grassrootz enables Operation Cleft to devise a range of fundraising initiatives and also provides a vehicle for other groups including sports clubs, social and common interest groups to fundraise on our behalf.

And Operation Cleft has also given our website and branding a facelift. Our soon-to-be-launched website, designed by Box Hill TAFE Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design student Maddie Schaeche, enables more ease in navigation. This new website also corresponds with our branding and marketing image, created and designed by Rotarian Grant Gittus, which now gives greater focus on the positive



effects of the project – the Gift of a Smile for Life.

We are delighted to welcome some new people to Operation Cleft. In Bangladesh, we welcome two highly qualified Bangladeshi plastic surgeons to our in-country surgical team - Dr Sayed Ahmed Siddiky and Dr Tanveer Ahmed. With an exciting milestone looming – we should reach 11,000 operations by the end of June 2017 - it's great that we now have these two surgeons on board.

Operation Cleft also has a new staff member – Narisha De Silva is Operation Cleft's Fundraising Officer as of May 2017. Narisha's recent fundraising experience has been with Connections Uniting Care and Ronald McDonald House, Monash. We look forward to the events and fundraising initiatives she will organise.

In the last six months, Operation Cleft has received many donations from clubs and groups. In particular, the continued support from the Rotary Club of Bendigo, who through their fundraising, especially their Night Golf event, have funded more than 300 operations to date. An outstanding effort indeed!

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Operation Cleft Newsletter, including the report from our in-country project manager, the success story of Razima, and Operation Cleft Ambassador Janne Speirs' account of her visit to one of our surgical camps in Bangladesh.

Op Shop Proceeds Support Operation Cleft

In April 2017, Operation Cleft has received \$15,000 from the earnings of the Rotary Recycle Op Shop at 1113 Riversdale Road, Surrey Hills. The successful Op Shop was established to raise funds for the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central, and the Club has now allocated \$15,000 of this fiscal year's earnings to Operation Cleft. Through the hard work of the volunteers in the Op Shop, and the generosity of the Rotary Club, 50 operations will be funded, and 50 children will be given the Gift of a Smile for Life.



Newsletter By Email

Think about the planet and get a little greener – have your Operation Cleft newsletter delivered twice a year by email. Email us at info@operationcleft.org.au with your name, current postal address and your email address, and we'll make sure our bi-annual newsletter will go to you via email.



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My Visit to an Operation Cleft Surgical Camp

Janne Speirs

Janne Speirs, a long-standing ambassador for Operation Cleft and District Governor Elect for Rotary District 9820, recently travelled to Bangladesh. Janne and her long-time friend Jenny visited an Operation Cleft surgical camp held at Dhaka City Hospital in February 2017. Here is an excerpt from a recent article Janne wrote about her experience.



It must be a daunting prospect for a parent to give their very special child to a stranger to be taken away for surgery, not really knowing what to expect – bearing in mind, some of them were as young

as six months old. Remember also that we are talking about rural villagers here rather than city dwellers. For many of them, I would imagine that coming to Dhaka would be daunting, let alone coming into this very different environment. In my mind, this is an example of just how much these parents care about their children and how willing they are to do whatever it takes to give them a better chance in life.



While at the surgical camp, I endeavoured to stay hands off, but in the end, as I've always been drawn to babies, I just had to get some cuddles.

Although my self-esteem took a battering with their reactions - I'm not used to babies being scared of me - I did get lovely cuddles from one gorgeous little dot - an absolute little doll, just six months old and so beautiful. She buried her face in my neck and cuddled and was obviously trying to crawl as she would try to walk up my chest at the same time. Then her head would lift off my shoulder, and the most stunning smile would erupt on her face!!! I was ready to run off with her and laughingly turned away from mum (who had some English) and said I was going. She and the other mums thought it was great fun. Mum was quite stunning as well and had the most beautiful, playful and loving relationship with her daughter!! I have already requested some 'after' photos!

At the other end of the spectrum, a poor lad with a long way to go was also there with his mum, who looked older and very stoic and careworn but responsive to simple comments and grateful for her son to be given this opportunity. He could have been anywhere from 11-17 years old, but it was so hard to tell, as although he was obviously well into his treatment, his scars were still very noticeable - right from his lower eyelids to his mouth on both sides, and so his face was very set and expressionless. I will also try to keep informed on how he is going as it would be lovely to see the result, but, as I said, he still has a long way to go. Some people have asked me since I've been home, whether these children were ostracised or outcast because of their facial issues and I'm sure that must sometimes happen, at least in the wider community if not within the family. However, the children Jenny and I saw at this

camp were obviously loved just like any other child by their parents. In a previous era, they may have been 'put to work' to get money for the family by using their cleft as a begging tool. The very fact that so many parents bring their children to the camps for repair surgery shows this to be a dying trend, which is just wonderful to see.



There is so much else I could say about this incredible opportunity. Jenny and I will never forget the welcome we received or the wonderful work we witnessed being undertaken to help the rural and impoverished children of Bangladesh have one less hurdle to overcome in their lives. Thanks must go to Professor Bari, the local benefactors and media representatives, they all made us feel so welcome. It was a privilege to be welcomed by the families and allowed a small insight into their struggles and hopes.

To read the full article, go to www.operationcleft.org.au

Report From Bangladesh

Md Moinul Islam, Country Manager, Operation Cleft, Bangladesh
Report on patients operated on from July 2016 to the present date

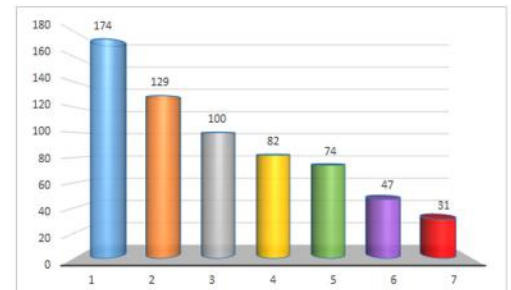
Total Surgical Camps completed: 28
Total patients treated: 637

Male/Female Ratio
Male: 350
Female: 287



Patient Distribution by District:

1. Dhaka - 174
2. Rangpur - 129
3. Netrokona - 100
4. Rajshahi - 82
5. Thakurgaon - 74
6. Jessore - 47
7. Bayguna - 31



Monthly Distribution of Patients

July - 38
August - 11
September - 28
October - 117
November - 20
December - 137
January - 56
February - 55
March - 95
April - 80



Surgeons' Individual Progress:

Dr. Shamsuddin Ahmed: 356
Dr. Shahidul Bari: 138
Dr. Maruf Alam Chy: 102
Dr. Abhi Kumar Chakraborty: 37
Dr. Tanveer Ahmed: 04

Target | smiles

Operation Cleft has launched a new fundraising campaign – Target 1000 Smiles. Target 1000 Smiles aims to get 1000 people to commit to a monthly donation of just \$25 for one year*. A donation of \$25 per month for a year will fund an operation.

Breaking down the cost of an operation to less than a dollar a day will be much more appealing and affordable for many households. This campaign will also enable Operation Cleft to expand its reach in the community and develop an expanded email list to inform of the positive work we are doing in Bangladesh.



Target 1000 Smiles centres on Emon's story. Born with a cleft lip and palate to a family struggling under the pressures of poverty, Emon was brought to an Operation Cleft surgical camp at the age of four months to receive the repair surgery free of charge. And as the picture shows, Emon is now a bright and bubbly

little boy with a more positive future ahead of him, all made possible by the exceptional skills of Bangladeshi plastic surgeons and the generosity of Operation Cleft donors.

Now is the time to reach out to your family and friends and help us attain our Target 1000 Smiles.

To become a monthly donor and change a life by making a real difference to a child in need in Bangladesh, fill out the attached form and forward it to Operation Cleft or go to

donate.grassrootz.com/operationcleft/target-1000-smiles

* Operation Cleft donations of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible in Australia.

New Look – New Website

Operation Cleft has undergone a facelift in its branding, marketing image and website. Easier to navigate and with more direct links for fundraising and donation, the new website gives a greater focus on the positive effects of the project – the Gift of a Smile for Life.

The new website, which will be launched in June, was designed, coded and uploaded by Maddie Schaeche, a Box Hill TAFE student currently enrolled in an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design. "We knew the site needed an upgrade and we knew what we wanted it to achieve. So we approached Connie-marie Albanese, Work Placement Coordinator at Box Hill TAFE, with our outline and this project became part of their course assessment," said Operation Cleft Treasurer Peter Enlund. "Maddie's presentation and design were exactly what we wanted from the brief we gave to the students. She really put her heart and soul into this, and we are so grateful. We now have a terrific website that actually shows the positive effects, and the difference Operation Cleft makes to the underprivileged in Bangladesh."

As part of the rebranding and to ensure that Operation Cleft is more recognisable and identifiable within the community, we also have all new administration and marketing materials. Created and designed by graphic artist and Rotarian Grant Gittus, the new materials correspond with the new website. "I think it's important that people see that Operation Cleft is making a positive change in the lives of those less fortunate and when your slogan is "the Gift of a Smile for Life", you've got to see those smiles," said Grant. "Working with Maddie's website design and making sure all materials and displays correspond, gives the charity a more recognisable image in the community."

We hope you take the time to have a look at the new, improved Operation Cleft website – www.operationcleft.org.au

"Success isn't about how much money you make, it's about the difference you make to people's lives."
Michelle Obama

**MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

Wine of the Month



As the financial year comes to an end, it's either time to celebrate an impending tax return or start to budget for paying back the gap. And with the weather turning cold, why not sit by the fire sipping on a fabulous red from Prospect Wines – all while raising money for Operation Cleft. Wines featured for the month of June are a Grampians Shiraz 2013 and a Premium South Australia Shiraz 2015.

For more information about the Wine of the Month and the Operation Cleft fundraising deals from Prospect Wines, go to

www.prospectwines.com.au/html/s13_shopping/default.asp?keyword=Operation-Cleft

Bendigo Golf Night

For the ninth year, the Rotary Club of Bendigo has held their annual golf event in support of Operation Cleft. Through these events, the Club has given the "Gift of a Smile for Life" to more than 300 underprivileged children born with cleft conditions in Bangladesh and put them on a path towards a brighter future. Club President Glenn Reilly said, "When one of our club members, John Krakowiak, visited Bangladesh with a group of Rotarians ten years ago, seeing the need and the life-altering results are what started our support of this project".

With so many golf events taking place at the Bendigo Gold Club, the organising group decided to try and make this one a bit different, and five years ago the Night Golf event was initiated. With glow-in-the-dark golf balls (which glow for eight minutes once hit) and glow sticks down the sides of each fairway, the Night Golf event has been a big success. "We felt we needed a point of difference and it has really made for a fun night with this nine-hole Ambrose event, we attract the more social golfers who are out for some fun," Glenn said.



How it works is that each team that wants to play must raise \$300 – the cost of one operation. This year's event saw 22 teams take part, have fun on an almost perfect night and change many lives. "The support we have received from local businesses has been amazing, and it's great seeing teams come back year after year," Glenn said. "We always point out that just by them playing they are changing a child's life forever, which really hits home with them."

With 22 teams and the support of our sponsors, the Rotary Club of Bendigo has raised \$10,000 this year – which equals their best result in the nine years this event has been going.

Since Operation Cleft started, the Rotary Club of Bendigo have raised over \$85,000 for Operation Cleft – that's the Gift of more than 300 Smiles.

Our thanks go to Rotary Club of Bendigo President Glenn Reilly, for his continued dedication and supreme organisation skills in getting this event off the ground each year. And thanks also goes out to all the sponsors of the event, who have all been sent Certificates of Appreciation from Operation Cleft.

If you belong to a sporting group, social club, school group or other common interest group and would like to hold a fundraiser for Operation Cleft, get in touch with our office via email at info@operationcleft.org.au or by phone on 03 9877 9717 as we can offer support, organisation, sponsorship information, display materials and merchandise.

Operation Cleft Success Story – Razima



Meet Razima – who was born in rural Bangladesh with a cleft lip. Difficulty in feeding resulted in Razima not reaching early development milestones including weight gain, growth and sensory development. Razima is one of four children, and while her parents wanted everything in life for her, the money for cleft repair surgery was way beyond their means. Hearing that they could get this repair surgery for free for their daughter, Razima was brought by her family to an Operation Cleft surgical camp when she was four years old.

And as the photos show, this life-altering surgery has certainly given Razima the "Gift of a Smile for Life". Razima is now a thriving, talkative young girl, who is going to school and has an ever-expanding circle of friends and social group.

For less than a dollar a day – just \$25 a month for one year – you too can make a big difference in the life of a child in Bangladesh by gifting a smile for life and setting them on the path to a brighter, more positive future.

Target 1000 Smiles:
donate.grassrootz.com/operationcleft/target-1000-smiles

Name: _____

Address: _____ State _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to make a **Monthly** donation of \$25 \$50 \$75 \$ _____ for 12 months*

OR I would like to make a donation of \$ _____.

*If ticked, the amount indicated will be charged to your credit card monthly for 12 months from first debit date.

I wish to pay by Cheque CreditCard Name on card: _____

Card Number: Expiry Date: / CVC

Signature: _____