

**BACKGROUNDER**

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(Photos available upon request)**

**Operation Smile Empowers Students with Service, Leadership and Education**

Approximately 5,000 students serve as Operation Smile volunteers working to raise funds and awareness in more than 450 schools across the United States and around the world, including Honduras, Kenya, Morocco and Vietnam. Since its inception, Operation Smile's Student Program has been an integral part of the organization, and student involvement has expanded to elementary, junior and senior high schools, universities, and medical schools. Through their school- and community-based fund-raising, student volunteers raise an estimated \$400,000 annually for Operation Smile.

These Student Associations promote Operation Smile's medical work and conduct fund-raising projects for missions. The five pillars of the program are Leadership, Education, Awareness, Fund-raising and Service. Operation Smile's Student Program helps build leadership skills, self-esteem, a lifelong commitment to serving others and teaches the importance of multiculturalism and social awareness. Each year, hundreds of student volunteers from around the world come together to participate in the *International Student Leadership Conference*, where they learn how to meet challenges and take confident steps toward leadership and strong character development.

Two outstanding high school students are selected to participate on each Operation Smile international medical mission. The role of these students on missions is to teach primary health care to patients and families at the mission site and local hospitals, schools and orphanages. Students give interactive presentations on topics including burn care and prevention, nutrition, dental care and oral rehydration. Operation Smile provides education and training for these students at biannual *Mission Training Workshops*.

"Operation Smile is unique in its commitment to youth and student education," said Co-founder Kathy Magee. "The spirit of volunteerism shines throughout the United States and the world as thousands of young adults participate in associations in their high schools and colleges. The greatest illustration of the commitment of youth is found on the medical missions and at the *International Student Leadership Conference*. Watching students from all over the United States and from our mission countries join together and work on the skills and knowledge needed to participate on a mission and develop student organizations is an exhilarating experience."