

Thank you, President Barakauskas and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about Operation Smile, but before I do, I want to thank our GFWC International Outreach Chairman, Janet Trombetti, for being here today, and also I need to express my thanks to her publicly for being the great advocate that she has been for GFWC's 4 international partners – Operation Smile, Heifer International, Shot@Life and UNICEF-Stop Human Trafficking.

So, we will start simply by saying that you know that when you first meet someone, the first thing you probably are looking at, is, the individual's eyes. My mother always told me that her father always said, when you talk to someone, look them in the eye. But the second thing you probably are looking at when you meet someone, especially when it is a happy occasion, is their smile. And a smile is a very, very important thing, because, like the eyes, it is a window into one's personality. It also is important because it's the opening to the door that allows us to speak and to eat.

There is a child born in this world every 3 minutes who has a cleft lip or cleft palate or both. It is not a pretty thing, nor is it a healthy thing. Having a cleft lip or cleft palate affects a child's ability to eat and to speak and it can even affect hearing. In actuality, throughout the world, one in 500 to 750 babies, is born with either a cleft lip or cleft palate. The next bit of information I am going to share with you, if I were writing a paper, would require footnotes, this information is shared directly from Wikipedia and Operation Smile...

In 1982 Dr. William "Bill" Magee Jr., a plastic surgeon, and Kathy Magee, who was then a social worker and a nurse, were invited to join a Philippine cleft repair mission with a group of medical volunteers.<sup>[2][3]</sup> When they realized that this group would not be returning to the Philippines even though there were hundreds of children who needed surgery, they established Operation Smile.<sup>[2]</sup>

"It was guilt...We saw hundreds of children and saw many more turned away. We knew that this group was not planning to return. So we planned another trip, but when we saw how many people were suffering because of their facial deformities, we had to keep on going back."

As of June 2016, Operation Smile has provided more than 270,000 free surgeries to children with cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities. It is one of the largest surgical organizations in the world, and is a pioneer in advocating for safe surgery in resource-poor environments. With a network of more than 4,000 medical volunteers from over 80 countries, Operation Smile continues to provide free medical care for patients around the world.

### **What is Cleft Lip?**

The lip forms between the fourth and seventh weeks of pregnancy. As a baby develops during pregnancy, body tissue and special cells from each side of the head grow toward the center of the face and join together to make the face. This joining of tissue forms the facial features, like the lips and mouth. A cleft lip happens if the tissue that makes up the lip does not join completely before birth. This results in an opening in the upper lip. The opening in the lip can be a small slit or it can be a large opening that goes through the lip into the nose. A cleft lip

can be on one or both sides of the lip or in the middle of the lip, which occurs very rarely. Children with a cleft lip also can have a cleft palate.

### **What is Cleft Palate?**

The roof of the mouth (palate) is formed between the sixth and ninth weeks of pregnancy. A cleft palate happens if the tissue that makes up the roof of the mouth does not join together completely during pregnancy. For some babies, both the front and back parts of the palate are open. For other babies, only part of the palate is open.

Quoting the Website of Operation Smile...

The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), one of the world's largest women's volunteer service organizations, has supported Operation Smile for more than 20 years. They've raised money for medical missions and donated handmade quilts, blankets, hospital gowns, smile bags, and collected personal hygiene products and toys. Many GFWC members, as medical professionals, have accompanied us on medical missions. During our long partnership, they have raised more than \$1 million through their Outreach for Children program to benefit Operation Smile.

Operation Smile thanks all GFWC members for their ongoing support and for recognizing that every child deserves the chance to smile.

Today I have brought a great deal of information from Operation Smile, about Operation Smile. I am hoping that some of you will bring this information back to your Clubs. I want to give a shout out to the Newtown Women's Club, as they are an appreciated supporter of Operation Smile.

An example of what your individual club can do to help Operation Smile is to make and fill smile bags. After receiving surgery, each child receives a smile bag. It is filled with small, personal care items as well as toys, stickers and most importantly, a small mirror that the child can view his or her beautiful new smile. You've heard the phrase that life's simple pleasures mean so much, making smile bags would put a smile on the faces of the women in your club as well as the child who will receive it, thousands of miles away.

Quote from Janet Trombetti's August 27, 2016 speech to the International Board of Directors of GFWC

My goal is to have every state federation thinking "Locally and Globally" because children everywhere need our help. We can always improve our programs in our own communities. I would just like to see us stretch our giving to developing communities around the world."

So thank you again, Janet, for being here and I hope that the Club Presidents here today will take some information back to their clubs on Operation Smile.