



creating smiles

in this edition: student volunteers served their local hospitals and share the impact of their experience
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Operation  Smile

JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

GLOBAL SMILE NEWS

brought to you by Operation Smile's
Global Leadership Council of
university student volunteers



Folksong, Thailand

Click on his photo to read his story.

Students on Programs

ISLC 2025

Community Outreach

Medical Programs

Fundraisers

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Global Calendar

We want to feature your work!

Thank you so much to all the student leaders who have submitted highlights of your events! If you would like to be featured, we want to hear from you: submit your event descriptions through this [Google Form](#).

About the GLC

The Global Leadership Council (GLC) helps clubs worldwide succeed in their goals by providing advice and tools to support students in their fundraising endeavors. We are all students with experience running events and are here to help you manage any struggles that come your way.

7 Students

attended programs in these countries



Student Testimonials

Katelyn & Willy: Bolivia Connections

In August, Operation Smile conducted a service trip to Bolivia, sending four students across the globe to help support the cleft community there. Throughout the journey, the volunteers shared how the experience changed their lives and provided them with a new perspective.

Each day consisted of helping with preoperative and postoperative duties, including connecting with the children set to receive cleft lip or palate surgery. Willy Sikora detailed the daily routine during the trip.

“At the hospital, our day-to-day work was emotional support for the patients and their families, as well as providing, through translation, important health care education tips,” Sikora said. “In the surrounding community, we talked to local Operation Smile clubs and their members and encouraged them to be more active in their participation, as they are fortunate to have quarterly programs in their immediate area.”

During their time in Bolivia, the volunteers had the opportunity to bond and connect with the local children awaiting surgery. Katelyn Freeburn shared how helping out the children led to a meaningful connection in her life.

“I would constantly play with the children right before they went into surgery,” Freeburn said. “I could feel a close connection, because usually I don’t understand the situation, but I could now feel the parents’ anxiety because they go through a lot.”

However, the trip provided some unexpected moments for the volunteers.



Sikora shared one memorable experience from the trip and how it has stuck with him.

“A specific memory or event that stuck with me was playing with a little girl as well as speaking to a patient’s father without the use of a translator,” Sikora said. “These events stick with me because she became less stressed as we played. Her family was less concerned about her, and was able to focus on what the medical team was telling them. It was a remarkable moment.”

In addition to building a deeper connection with the children impacted by a cleft lip or palate, Freeburn also shared how her trip to Bolivia reshaped her perspective on hardship. Freeburn shared that spending time in a new community allowed her to reflect.

“Everyone has their own life,” Freeburn said. “I’m a university student; right now, my biggest trouble is trying to wake up on time and get to classes. But in Bolivia, their biggest struggles are finding good health care, making it through the day. ... That puts into perspective the idea that we are all just humans trying to get through our lives.”

ISLC 2025

What was your favorite ISLC Moment?

Meet: María José Pacheco from Frankfurt International School (FIS) in Germany!

Reconnecting with friends I met at the previous conference and witnessing how much we have grown as leaders and individuals. It was deeply inspiring to see our shared passion continue to evolve. Another highlight was the opportunity to speak with the founders of Operation Smile; their words and vision once again reminded me of the profound impact this organization has around the world and why I love being part of this global family.



Meet: Uzma Popatiya from OSDRC- Student Club at Jewels International School of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo!

My favorite ISLC moment was when we had the Cleft Connect program and when we got to hear from Kathy and Bill Magee. The reason why Cleft Connect was my favorite part of the ISLC is because we could hear other speakers who had been through the surgeries and have cleft to know what it feels like and how we could help and support them, so that when we are in the surgical program we know how to approach the kids. My other part of ISLC was when Bill and Kathy were presenting to us on how they worked out Operation Smile, and their experiences, it was just so interesting and inspiring!

Community Outreach

Meet: Kanthita Phadthananarak from ANS Operation Smile Thailand!

Sticker Day

During the club's opening day of the new school year at ANS, the Operation Smile leaders decided to raise awareness about the club by giving smile stickers to members to stick on other students and teachers around the school, while informing them about the club's purpose, upcoming activities, and goals. This activity not only helped raise awareness but also encouraged students to participate in future events. Through this, the club was able to spread smiles and inspire more students to join the cause of bringing more smiles to others. Feedback: As a volunteer I believe the event was very successful, as it raised awareness about the club and cleft lip and cleft palate conditions. Furthermore, sharing smiles with others was simple, yet when others received it, it was meaningful and made everyone's day.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Kanthita at k4nthita@gmail.com



Meet: Chalisa Nitayavardhana from ANS Operation Smile Thailand!

Craft for Clefts

Crafts for Clefts is a weekly event we do with primary students to nurture and encourage children to be empathetic and to help build a sense of care and selflessness. In this event, we have volunteers from secondary each week make friendship bracelets with primary students while explaining to them what Operation Smile is and what we do. We then give those bracelets to children who have just undergone surgery when we visit them on our medical mission to help them and their families feel more comforted.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Chalisa at neenachalisa19@gmail.com

Community Outreach

Meet: Apinporn Ratanaworabhan from ANS Operation Smile Thailand!

Guest Speaker: Carlos Verón!

Our student program director, Carlos Verón, recently visited ANS's Smile Club. It was an awesome opportunity for our club members to learn about the story behind Operation Smile and Carlos' inspiring journey with the organization. He shared his passion for helping children and the incredible impact his work has made, not only on countless patients' lives but also in inspiring students like us around the globe. This was also a great chance to learn about the global work of Operation Smile beyond Thailand. Plus, this was a great introduction to Operation Smile's global network of passionate students and volunteers, as well as a ton of future opportunities, including ISLC 2026 in Bangkok!

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Apinporn at ai.apinporn@gmail.com



Medical Programs

Meet: Protais Mukunzi from Operation Smile Student Club-Rwanda in Rwanda!

Local Operation Smile Surgical Training Rotation

From 23rd to 29th August 2025, it was my first time volunteering as a medical student in the Operation Smile Rwanda Surgical Training Rotation held at Gisenyi Level 2 Teaching Hospital in the Western Province of Rwanda. It was attended by 62 volunteers, including Operation Smile Rwanda staff members. I participated in delivering comprehensive care to Operation Smile patients. I volunteered in the comprehensive screening of all patients as well as in the operating room, where I served as an assistant in doing plastic surgical procedures. Together with the team, we have provided successful life-saving surgical therapy to 61 patients.

You can learn more by contacting Protais at protaismukunzi355@gmail.com



Meet: Yu-ee from Harrow International School Bangkok's Operation Smile Club in Thailand

Chiang Mai Long Term Surgical Program

On the 29th and 30th of September, eight students from Harrow International School Bangkok travelled to Chiang Mai to volunteer at the Princess Sirindhorn Foundation Craniofacial Center (SCFC) at Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital. During the visit, they observed medical professionals treating patients with cleft lip, cleft palate, and other craniofacial deformities. The students witnessed collaboration among multidisciplinary teams dedicated to restoring both function and confidence. The experience also highlighted the treatments' crucial role in improving patients' overall health.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Yu-ee at yuesrisuwanunt@gmail.com

Medical Programs

Meet: Pariyakorn Jaktreemongkhon from Operation Smile MUIDS in Thailand!

13th Tawanchai Camp: Quality of Life Development for Post-Operative Cleft Lip and Palate Patients

On August 30–31, 2025, Operation Smile Thailand partnered with the Tawanchai Center at Khon Kaen University to host the 13th Tawanchai Camp: Quality of Life Development for Post-Operative Cleft Lip and Palate Patients. We, volunteers from the Operation Smile Club at Mahidol University International Demonstration School, joined to promote oral hygiene and confidence-building. On Day 1, we taught 50-plus patients proper brushing using dental models and posters. On Day 2, we hosted a fun ping-pong game and ended the day with a dance-off, spreading laughter and joy. The experience was truly heartwarming, inspiring us to continue supporting these incredible patients.

You can learn more about how you can be involved in this activity by contacting Pariyakorn at pariyakron1207@gmail.com



Meet: Twizeyimana Eric from Operation Smile Rwanda!

Volunteer Internship at Gisenyi Hospital

During my previous internship at Gisenyi Hospital with OP Smile Rwanda, I assisted in surgical care for patients with keloids and chronic wounds. I supported healthcare professionals in pre- and post-operative care, to keep sterile, educated patients and families on proper hygiene and wound management, and assisted in organizing the clinic. This hands-on experience improved my practical skills in wound care, patient education, and clinical procedures.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Twizeyimana at twizeyimanaeric180@gmail.com

Medical Programs

Meet: Pook Chatjaval, Shalisa, and Praewa Chantabutara from Thailand!

Yasothon short-term surgical program

During the 103rd Operation Smile Yasothon Medical Mission 2025, a total of 64 patients were screened, with 39 selected for operations over three days. I began to realize that Operation Smile was not just a group for medical students but rather a community that welcomes anyone who can contribute and participate in changing people's lives. Personally, I enjoyed this experience from the beginning to the end helping different patients, making new friends and especially getting to see their new smiles. This experience had completely changed my perspective of life. By the end, I have come to realize that life is not simple for everyone. Many face struggles that are ignored by others. Things we often find easy such as eating, speaking or even smiling can become major obstacles within the daily lives of those who have cleft palates. Understanding this has made me become more grateful and more motivated to use my opportunities to help others.

You can learn more about how you can be involved in this activity by contacting Pook Chatjaval at pchatjaval@gmail.com, shalisach.sa@gmail.com and praewa.ch06@gmail.com



Meet: Alexandra Cinamula from OSDCR Student Club in the Democratic Republic of Congo!

September 2025 Surgical Program

ISLC had a great impact on our students. Just a few months after ISLC, Uzma Popatiya mobilised her friend from the JEWELS International School, who joined our surgical programs and helped in various capacities during the program. Some students assisted with filling the charts, others helped with logistics and patient meals, and some in translation. There was great participation of students from the fast-growing OSRD Student Club.

You can learn more about how you can be involved in this activity by contacting Alexandra at acinamula@gmail.com

Fundraisers



Meet: Nitchamon from Newton Operation Smile in Thailand!

Beats n' Bites

On September 19 2025, Student Operation Smile Clubs in Thailand came together and organised and raised awareness at SWU Night Market. Hosted by Satit Prasarnmit, together with Newton, NIST, MUIDS, and Amnuay Silpa, we set up fun booths — selling cookies, donuts, and drinks, alongside live music, while also sharing about cleft conditions and the meaningful work of Operation Smile. We raised over ฿7200 in this event. This night was filled with energy, collaboration, and community spirit!

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Nitchaon at nenehankla@gmail.com



Meet: Kelly Hallauer from Auburn University Operation Smile Student Club in Alabama, USA

Cleft Repair Matching Game

The Operation Smile Club at Auburn University participated in a STEM exhibition at Neville Arena where over 1,000 middle school students from various counties across Alabama visited to learn more about opportunities in STEM. The students were able to participate in an interactive matching game where they worked to match the before and after pictures of patients surgeries. The club was able to raise awareness for cleft conditions and educated the rising generation about cleft lips and cleft palates.

You can learn more about how you can organize this activity by contacting Kelly at kellyhallauer@gmail.com



Fundraisers

Meet: Wynn Yangchana from Operation Smile Thailand!

Sponsoring 1.2k Smile Bags

In August, Operation Smile Thailand was running out of smile bags to give to patients post-operation that could be used. To help with that, I reached out to PepsiCo APAC, which has generously supported us by donating a total of 1,200 free smile bags. These bags will be used for multiple Operation Smile Thailand surgical programs to come.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Wynn at wyangchana@gmail.com



Meet: Warisara Auttakowittayakul from Operation Smile by PSM in Thailand

Beats'n Bites For Smile

Beats'n Bites for Smile was a fundraising booth organized during SWU Night Market at Srinakharinwirot University. The event aimed to bring joy and promote charitable giving through selling handmade desserts and drinks. With more than one hundred participants, the event created a lively atmosphere that connected students from Newton, Amnuay Silpa, and MUIDS, fostering both collaboration and compassion. Our team designed digital posters and shared them through Instagram stories, SWU student groups, and LINE communities. We also put up printed posters around school. Additionally, our pre-event teasers helped attract attention and excitement before the day of the event.

You can learn more about how you can organize this activity by contacting Warisara at aoeywarisara@gmail.com

Fundraisers

Meet: Samaana Jaffer from York University in Toronto, Canada

York University Fundraiser

On September 16, Operation Smile York University hosted a Krispy Kreme fundraiser on campus to raise money and awareness for children with cleft lip and palate. The tabling event invited students to purchase donuts and learn about the club's mission. To boost engagement, we featured a "Spin the Wheel" game, where students followed our social media to earn a spin, play fun mini games, and win candy or Operation Smile merchandise. Our executive members actively spread awareness throughout the day. The event was a success, raising \$500 and reaching many students across campus, promoting community engagement for a meaningful cause. We promoted the event through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, using posts, stories, and reels to reach students. We also spread the word through word of mouth and posted flyers across campus.

You can learn more about how you can organize this activity by contacting samaanaj25@gmail.com, marymesehaa@gmail.com, wasfy2005@icloud.com



Meet: Palida Busaracumwong from ANS Operation Smile in Thailand!

Smile Week

From 1-5 September 2025, the ANS Operation Smile Club hosted a "Smile Week" filled with fun and enthralling activities, from selling snacks to taping the teachers. Our mission was to raise awareness on cleft lip and cleft palate, as well as encouraging everyone to smile! It was great to see our community come together and share lots of positive energy and laughter as a whole. The collective effort resulted in raising 2451 USD for the club, reflecting our school's commitment to charitable initiatives.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Palida at jaydapalida@gmail.com



Fundraisers

Meet: Apinporn Ratanaworabhan from ANS Operation Smile Thailand!

Tape a teacher!

On 5th of September, the ANS Operation Smile club hosted an exciting, whole-school event of “Tape the teacher!” Our team’s mission was to organize an event full of laughter, smiles and unforgettable moments for everyone. We are proud to say that this event has been a great success, both in fundraising for Operation Smile Thailand and reminding students of Operation Smile’s inspiring vision of a kind and inclusive world. This event truly solidified the striking impact of community, showing that when people come together, their collective strength, creativity, and compassion can achieve far more than any individual effort alone. Feedback: “As a teacher proudly “taped to the wall,” for a good cause. I was so impressed by our Operation Smile student leaders and volunteers. Their creativity, teamwork, and constant reflection made “Tape the Teacher” a huge success. They turned a fun idea into a powerful, schoolwide movement for compassion and global awareness.

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Apinporn at ai.apinporn@gmail.com



Meet: Dakota Musgrave from Vanderbilt Operation Smile in Tennessee, United States!

Pickle for Palates

We had 18 teams play in a doubles pickleball tournament! We were able to raise \$400 for Operation Smile! Pickle for Palates was a great way to get active with our members, and to bring new members into the club! We had the best time!

You can learn more about how you can get involved in this activity by contacting Dakota at dakotamusgrave@gmail.com



Workshops

Meet: Phaniphak Witchayathian from Operation Smile x Newton from Thailand

Inspire Change: Innovation for Burn Care

Participating in the “Inspire Change: Innovation for Burn Care” competition reminded our team that innovation begins with empathy. Through our project, Jai Glaa: A Burn Recovery Companion App, we aimed to bridge the gap between surgery and recovery for pediatric burn survivors. Our intention was to help children not only heal physically but also emotionally. Drawing from our experiences as Operation Smile volunteers, we saw how many young patients struggled after surgery, often losing confidence or abandoning therapy due to distance, discomfort, or fear. Jai Glaa became our way of turning compassion into action: combining technology and community insight to support healing at home. Throughout this journey, we realized that true innovation isn't just about creating something new. It's about understanding human pain and transforming it into purpose. Every idea, from journaling features to analyzing facial exercises, was inspired by real stories of resilience. This project taught us that change happens not through invention alone, but through listening, to the patients, the families, and the hearts behind every scar.

You can learn more about how you can organize this activity by contacting Phaniphak at phaniphak.w@gmail.com



Your Worldwide Calendar!

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	②	③	④	⑤	6
7	⑧	⑨	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



	DECEMBER
AFRICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering Day (5th): Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Morocco, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania Smile Day (5th): Tanzania
ASIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Father's Day (5th): Thailand Volunteering Day (5th): Australia, China, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering Day (5th): France, Italy, Ireland, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom
LATAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech Therapist's Day (2nd): Bolivia Doctor's Day (3rd): Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay Dentist's Day (4th): Peru Volunteering Day (5th): Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Republica Dominicana Mother's Day (8th): Panama Speech Therapist's Day (9th): Brazil
MENA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering Day (5th): Egypt, Jordan, United Arab Emirates
NORTH AMERICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering Day (5th): Canada, United States