



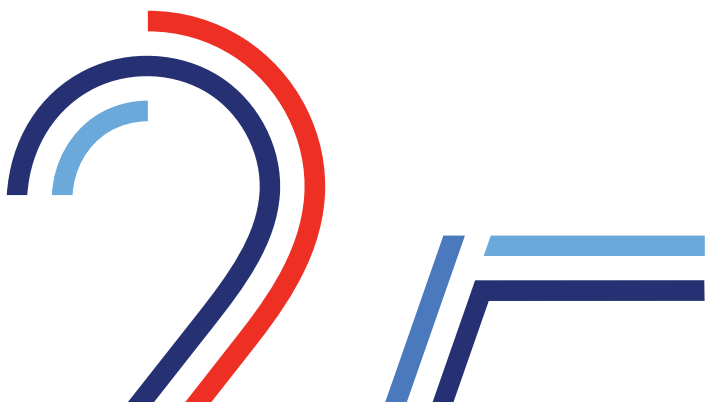
Impact Report

Spring 2024



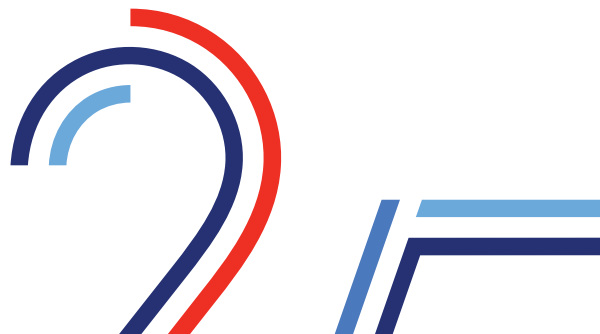
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Transforming Lives &
Global Cleft Care For 25 Years





Smile Train has received a Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator, demonstrating our fiscal responsibility and commitment to using your philanthropic dollars to create the highest impact for our patients.





Letter from Ashley

As we delve into this Donor Stewardship Report, I find it fitting to provide a brief overview of my Smile Train journey. I joined this remarkable organization in 2017 as In-House General Counsel, and in 2021, I assumed the role of Chief Operating Officer. This progression has been personally fulfilling and professionally invigorating, marking a period of transformative growth both for me and for Smile Train.

As the COO, I work closely with our President and CEO, Susie Schaefer, supporting the formulation of business strategy and ensuring that we have the right people and resources to make our vision a reality. It has been a privilege to contribute to Smile Train's operational excellence and witness the positive outcomes of our collective efforts, including yours as a valued donor. Together, we are making a real impact.

My introduction to this organization came when I worked with Smile Train as a client. At that point, I had never heard of them. However, I found the prospect of leaving the law firm environment while still contributing dynamically and positively to the legal field irresistibly appealing. Looking back, I recall when Smile Train had no legal department or structure. Today, we have evolved, expanded, and grown in remarkable ways.

Looking back even further, I am immensely excited about how much we have changed over the last 25 years. Witnessing the organization's growth, both in scale and impact, has been truly inspiring. The journey has been marked by dedication, resilience, and a commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Donors like you have been instrumental to every aspect of Smile Train's growth. Your investment in us and our work is the reason we have been able to double in size and expand our reach in just my time here, paving the way for even more creative and innovative endeavors — and more lives saved. We pride ourselves on being an agile organization, always ready to seize opportunities and adapt to ever-changing circumstances. My favorite



example of this is how, in the heart of the pandemic, when other cleft organizations were all but shut down completely, we were able to greatly expand our non-surgical comprehensive care offerings, thanks to your steadfast support.

Looking ahead to the next 25 years, I hope Smile Train continues building on our sustainable model, supporting more impactful care and empowering more local professionals to take on the burden of that care. From an operational standpoint, I envision expanding and enhancing our resources, fostering critical thinking on innovation, and evolving our work — I'm particularly excited about our recent developments in training cleft surgeons with virtual reality.

With heartfelt gratitude, I share with you the latest developments and reflections on our journey at Smile Train and want to express my most profound appreciation for making everything you are about to read possible. Together, we can look forward to a future where Smile Train continues to thrive, transforming lives and changing the world one smile at a time.

Thank you for being an integral part of Smile Train's journey.

Warm regards,

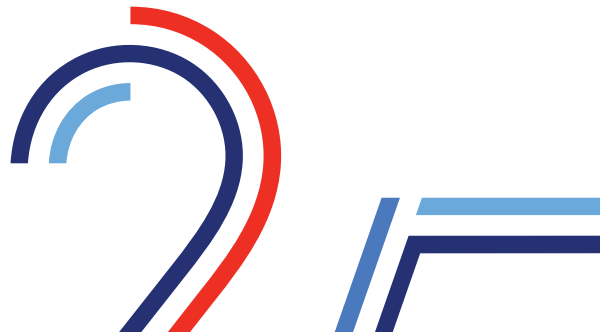
Ashley Ochs
*Chief Operating Officer
In House Counsel*

OUR VISION:

A world where every person has access to safe, high-quality, comprehensive cleft care and is able to live a full and healthy life.

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Dear Donors,

I am writing this letter with immense gratitude to express my heartfelt thanks for your incredible impact on my life through your generous support. I have been receiving Smile Train-supported cleft treatment from the dedicated team at the Philippine Band of Mercy since I was young, starting with surgeries. I am genuinely thankful for this life-changing opportunity.

Reflecting on my journey, I recall being very young when I first received your assistance, and although I don't have clear memories from that time, I deeply felt the positive impact of your support. As I embarked on my school years, I faced challenges like teasing and bullying due to my cleft. However, with the support of my loving family, understanding friends, and ongoing care from my cleft team, I found the strength to embrace myself fully and rise above the judgments of others.

Your contributions have not only provided me with essential surgeries and treatments but also empowered me to prioritize self-acceptance and resilience. The speech therapy, orthodontic care, and dental treatments I received have been instrumental in my development, boosting my confidence and helping me communicate better.

Today, as I pursue my studies in financial management at university, I am filled with hope and determination for the future. I dream of a career in banking or entrepreneurship, where I can give back and support others like me. Your generosity has inspired me to pay it forward and contribute to organizations like Smile Train, ensuring more individuals receive the life-changing support they need.

Thank you for believing in me and countless others who have benefited from your kindness. Your generosity has transformed lives and instilled hope and resilience in our hearts. I am eternally grateful for your support and hope you will continue touching the lives of those in need.

With heartfelt thanks and warm regards,

Jian

Highlights from 2023 to Present

Data taken from January 2023 - May 2024

150,000

SURGERIES SUPPORTED

- Performed by a network of 1,500+ surgeons
- Across 1,100+ different hospitals in 77 countries globally
- Including Smile Train's first-ever surgeries supported in Tunisia



1,200+

PARTNER TREATMENT CENTERS

80

ACTIVE COUNTRIES



8,500+

NUTRITION TREATMENTS



SPEECH
THERAPY

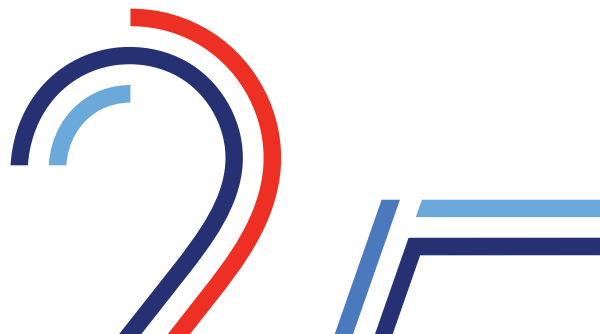
66,000+

SPEECH INTERVENTIONS



11,500+

ORTHOPEDIC PATIENTS





Study estimates \$69 billion in economic impact over 25 years

In collaboration with researchers, we've quantified the value of our work over the past quarter century.

In 2016, the British Medical Journal published an article about the societal gain provided by Smile Train's global surgical intervention program. Analyzing 11 years of data, the study showed that the care Smile Train supported around the world from 2001-2011 prevented significant lost welfare associated with clefts. The study calculated how many years each person would have lost to disability associated with their cleft without treatment and estimated our programs have returned around **\$20 billion USD to our patients' national economies.**

We've now updated this study to include another 11 years (2012-2023). The updated analysis estimates that **Smile Train has contributed a value of more than \$69 billion over the past 25 years.** *Please see the table on the next page.*

The table also shows how many primary surgeries Smile Train supported in selected countries between 2001 and 2023 as well as the disability-adjusted life years, or "DALYs," that these surgeries have averted. Having a cleft affects how people feel when they wake up and look in the mirror; whether they can go to school, make friends, or find work and just about every other aspect of day-to-day life – including overall health and life expectancy. DALYs turn these experiences into data, calculating the burden of each year a patient loses to their cleft.

Our analysis shows that **Smile Train-supported cleft surgeries have given our patients a combined 12 million years of their lives back,** as the table shows.



Fawad, Pakistan

What sets Smile Train apart?

How did we do it, and what sets us apart? We use a local, sustainable model, empowering medical practitioners with training, funding, and resources so they can provide children with free comprehensive cleft care. We have **awarded more than \$38 million in education and training grants to medical professionals** since we were founded, and we **are about to provide our 100,000th training opportunity.**

We also recognize the many challenges cleft patients face, so we enable comprehensive cleft care beyond surgery. These services include nutrition counseling, speech therapy, specialized orthodontics and dentistry, audiology and hearing care, and psychosocial support, all intended to ensure our patients' long-term, successful rehabilitation. Accessing cleft care can be logistically challenging and expensive, so we provide grants to help patients and their families overcome all obstacles to care. In the past 25 years, **we've supported over 600,000 families with funding for costs related to accessing cleft care.**

Among the countries where Smile Train has worked, India and Indonesia have shown some of the highest reductions in years lost to disability, translating into a massive economic impact: more than \$22 billion, collectively.

Smile Train-Sponsored Surgeries Prevent Years Lost to Disability			2001-2023
Country	Primary Surgery Count	Years Lost to Disability Averted	Economic Benefit
Afghanistan	11,268	78,848	\$101,914,674
Argentina	4,732	45,596	\$886,703,920
Armenia	17	135	\$778,070
Azerbaijan	302	3,087	\$54,621,821
Bangladesh	60,536	497,723	\$1,633,111,908
Benin	810	6,864	\$14,668,337
Bhutan	168	1,315	\$8,147,966
Bolivia	1,775	16,074	\$66,479,342
Brazil	34,788	321,056	\$5,504,449,013
Bulgaria	1,364	13,254	\$241,639,796
Burkina Faso	1,231	10,376	\$14,176,427
Burundi	3,146	22,405	\$14,984,046
Cambodia	11,499	91,792	\$224,918,755
Cameroon	2,944	23,017	\$67,938,972
Chile	3,917	39,626	\$743,509,834
China	304,866	2,941,205	\$19,527,283,416
Colombia	4,647	44,689	\$703,056,674
Congo DR	6,216	49,473	\$40,645,350
Côte D'Ivoire	2,027	15,326	\$56,952,862
Djibouti	242	1,947	\$4,187,766
Dominican Republic	278	2,217	\$43,422,249
Ecuador	2,132	20,979	\$132,291,348
Egypt	10,173	95,943	\$645,506,101
El Salvador	269	2,580	\$11,538,147
Ethiopia	35,503	246,971	\$377,951,137
Gambia	638	6,047	\$7,937,611
Georgia	242	2,302	\$13,114,290
Ghana	2,293	17,563	\$67,148,852
Guatemala	2,891	26,117	\$132,137,627
Guinea	1,026	8,365	\$14,435,292
Guyana	103	895	\$13,185,251
Haiti	452	3,200	\$10,080,125
Honduras	684	6,018	\$17,332,347
India	528,065	4,356,674	\$16,602,782,649
Indonesia	97,159	875,120	\$6,074,713,437
Iraq	777	6,493	\$68,840,003
Jordan	911	8,477	\$50,535,227
Kazakhstan	296	2,631	\$57,248,562
Kenya	10,958	87,909	\$238,976,181
Lao PDR	2,356	19,191	\$80,394,232
Lebanon	257	2,519	\$28,781,240

(continued on next page)

Smile Train-Sponsored Surgeries Prevent Years Lost to Disability			2001-2023
Country	Primary Surgery Count	Years Lost to Disability Averted	Economic Benefit
Liberia	354	2,438	\$1,998,221
Madagascar	1,225	11,210	\$10,604,619
Malawi	1,151	7,447	\$10,485,002
Malaysia	13	122	\$3,354,586
Mali	2,262	18,555	\$27,812,098
Mauritania	630	4,971	\$18,278,872
Mexico	18,188	175,493	\$3,253,264,903
Moldova	28	327	\$1,073,331
Mongolia	2,145	19,412	\$124,143,089
Morocco	160	1,595	\$7,061,426
Mozambique	1,384	10,968	\$11,226,358
Nepal	21,316	178,024	\$366,663,290
Nicaragua	1,097	10,534	\$30,584,747
Niger	3,822	35,218	\$29,462,422
Nigeria	30,831	242,594	\$993,735,134
Pakistan	91,262	772,895	\$2,516,862,764
Panama	127	1,220	\$26,598,958
Peru	7,293	71,721	\$970,092,657
Philippines	67,114	598,576	\$3,158,899,131
Russian Federation	3,976	37,586	\$832,870,822
Rwanda	2,698	22,452	\$32,045,088
Senegal	1,204	10,125	\$22,604,107
Sierra Leone	239	1,747	\$2,376,866
Somalia	5,310	39,825	\$44,125,995
South Africa	25	158	\$3,787,696
Sri Lanka	3,341	31,101	\$195,223,197
Sudan	42	139	\$1,216,682
Tajikistan	82	741	\$1,884,780
Tanzania	11,531	91,180	\$175,226,216
Thailand	3,235	29,322	\$271,717,120
Togo	729	6,204	\$8,820,092
Uganda	14,885	109,731	\$201,966,578
Ukraine	1,106	9,420	\$66,611,465
Uzbekistan	4,601	39,906	\$181,759,222
Venezuela	351	3,508	\$64,950,095
Vietnam	23,189	213,228	\$1,049,285,852
Yemen	1,334	10,613	\$16,767,904
Zambia	3,138	21,635	\$61,007,206
Zimbabwe	755	4,886	\$9,301,753
TOTAL	1,486,131	12,868,842	\$69,404,271,201

25 YEARS OF SMILES



1999

Charles B. Wang founds Smile Train according to a groundbreaking, sustainable “teach a man to fish” model of empowering community healthcare workers in cleft care.



2000

Our first patient, Wang Li, receives the cleft treatment that changes her life forever in Nanjing, China.



2002

We distribute **our first virtual surgical training materials** to medical professionals around the world, via CD-ROM.



2010

We celebrate **World Smile Day®** for the first time.



2012

We award our first grants to form Smile Train Choirs in Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru.



2013

Our revolutionary **Virtual Surgery Simulator** — the world’s first free, 3D, open-access, web-based, interactive surgical teaching tool for cleft surgery — debuts at the SXSW® Interactive Festival.



2017

Our first-of-its-kind **Cleft Community Advisory Council (CCAC)** is established to be the voice of the US cleft community at Smile Train.



2018

We proudly launched a five-year partnership with **GSK Consumer Healthcare** (now Haleon).



2020

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, our model of empowering local cleft teams allows us to sponsor more than **68,000 safe cleft surgeries** in 60+ countries from March - December.

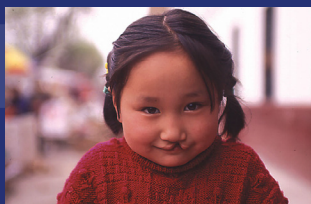
A Quarter Century of Changing the World One Smile at a Time

The history of Smile Train is, at its core, a story about the power each of us has to change the world. Let's relive it together.



2005

Our **Indian Medical Advisory Council** is established, the first of what would become eight regional advisory councils made up of the top cleft experts in every region we work.



2007

We celebrate our **200,000th sponsored cleft surgery!**



2009

Our short film **"Smile Pinki"** wins the Oscar® for Best Documentary Short Subject. This real-life fairytale follows six-year-old Pinki Sonkar's journey from her remote village in India to the cleft treatment that will transform her life forever.



2014

We celebrate our **1,000,000th cleft surgical patient:** Osawa from Tanzania.



2015

Our **Speech Games and Practice app** launches in Spanish on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.



2016

A landmark peer-reviewed study demonstrates how **one cleft surgery can contribute up to \$50,000** to the beneficiary's local economy.



2021

We open our first seven **Cleft Leadership Centers (CLCs)** at partner hospitals in Chile, Brazil, Mexico, India, Ghana, Vietnam, and the Philippines.



2022

We jointly publish the **first-ever State of the World's Cleft Care Report** with the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, validating that nutritional support is vital to every cleft journey.



2024

Smile Train celebrates **25 years, 2 million cleft surgeries, 2,100+ empowered healthcare workers, 1,200+ partner treatment centers, 90+ countries — and countless smiles!**



2 Million and Counting

Thanks to our dedicated supporters and global network of dedicated local partners, we have officially surpassed our two millionth cleft surgery. What an incredible way to celebrate our 25th year!

The story of this milestone starts in a tiny river village in South Sumatra, Indonesia, with Alim and his son Rajib.

In February 2024, hope came to their isolated village donning a camouflage uniform. The Indonesian Army arrived with the news the family had spent the past half century praying for: Alim and Rajib could both get free cleft surgery at their nearest hospital, and one of them would receive Smile Train's two millionth cleft surgery. The whole world was going to hear their story and marvel at their new smiles.

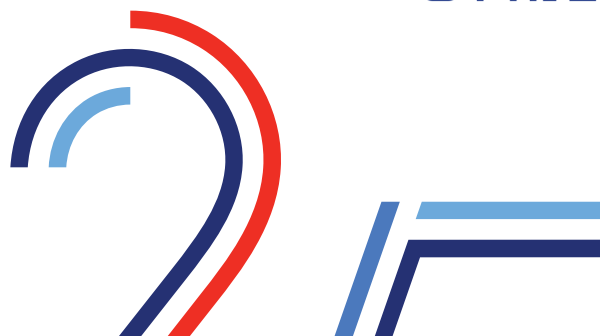


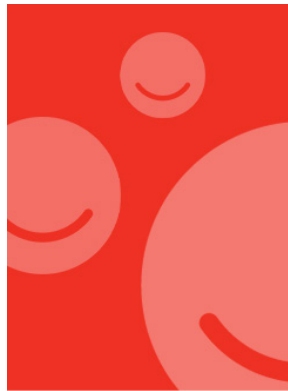
"Rajib should be two million," Alim insisted. "I will be the two-million-and-first."

Alim, age 50, had to drop out of school in first grade due to unrelenting bullying. It pained him to see his son suffer like he did, even if, at 10 years old, he still insisted on not dropping out.

Two million cleft surgeries is more than every other charity combined. Smile Train reached this milestone in just 25 years thanks to our unique, sustainable model of empowering local healthcare workers around the world to provide high-quality, free cleft treatment to their neighbors in need — no matter how remote — and generous gifts from people like you who understand that smiles change lives.

As we celebrate 25 years of lighting up the world with smiles, we know that another baby with a cleft is born every three minutes. And there are still more than a million more people just like Rajib and Alim waiting for the care that will turn their cleft into a second chance at life.





With 21,328 smiles collected,
**we officially set the GUINNESS
WORLD RECORDS™ title for “World’s
Largest Online Album of Mouths”**
on World Smile Day®, alongside
our partner Dentsply Sirona.





“Every Day After”

A partnership between Smile Train and Emmy®-award winning director Elisa Gambino, “**Every Day After**” is a 35-minute documentary that captures the story of a sister determined to do everything she can to provide her brother with a cleft all the care he needs.

The Oscar-qualified film has won numerous awards including Best Documentary at the HollyShorts Film Festival and the Paris International Film Festival. Executive produced by Dave Liu, chair of our Philanthropic Advisory Council, we have also hosted private screenings for our supporters in Chicago (hosted by Dr. Vikas and Mamta Patel), Houston (hosted by Dr. Larry Hollier & Crystle Stewart) plus Palo Alto & Los Angeles (hosted by Dave Liu).

The film provides a more nuanced look at the complexities of the healing process we don’t often see. And it honors the invisible labor of a sister whose love and action make it possible for her brother to experience the everyday joys and struggles of growing up.

Visit www.everydayafterfilm.com for more information.



Smile Heroes: How Your Funds Create Smiles Across the Globe

Smile Train is the world's leading cleft charity. We are committed to also being its most transparent and most accountable. We work hard every day to ensure that your funds are used solely for philanthropic purposes and are distributed in full compliance with US laws.

Our Grants Management team is essential to this endeavor. Their meticulous, risk-based approach includes collecting pre-grant inquiries and applications, accounting for grant funds, and regularly collecting grant reports designed to identify and mitigate potential risks, all in alignment with industry standards.

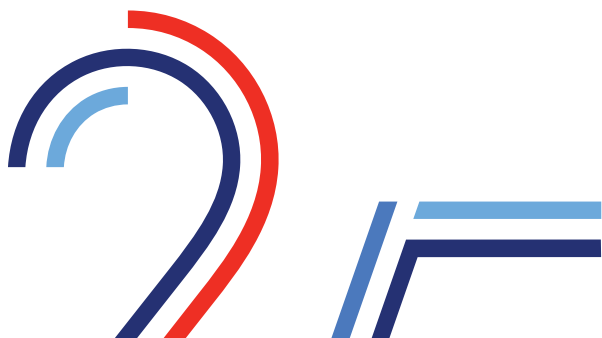
They also manage Smile Train's worldwide presence, which means always staying well-versed in global requirements and regulations and thoroughly reviewing all incoming funding applications and documentation from our international partners.



This responsibility also requires staying abreast of global trends, current events, sanction policies, international wire requirements, foreign funding laws in different countries, and US foreign relations.

Due diligence is at the heart of everything they do. Led by Emily Zoller, Director of Grants Administration, the team carefully screens officers and board members of new partner organizations against the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) watchlist, reviews payment information, coordinates the award letter and contract process, and schedules funding reports.

By adhering to legal requirements, staying informed on global dynamics, and conducting thorough due diligence, our Grants Management team ensures that you can trust Smile Train is always taking your money as far as it can go to bring more smiles to more children with clefts in need.







Corporate partnerships play a vital role in offering financial support and visibility, extending beyond monetary contributions. Partners including Haleon and Dentsply Sirona offer indispensable infrastructure, connections, and innovative ideas that enable Smile Train to create incredible impact and expand our influence.”

Jodi Schwarzer
Director Strategic Partnerships
Smile Train

Smile Train’s partnerships with Dentsply Sirona and Haleon are transforming cleft care around the world.

The collaborations are a testament to the good likeminded organizations can achieve when they combine their strengths to make the world a better place, one smile at a time.





Dentsply Sirona

In 2021, Smile Train proudly announced a transformative partnership with Dentsply Sirona, the world's largest manufacturer of dental products and technologies. The ambitious collaboration aimed to propel global cleft care forward with a five-year commitment and a generous \$5 million donation. The shared vision was clear: enhancing the quality of cleft treatment and broadening access, ultimately building a more sustainable, more smile-filled future for cleft-affected children and their families around the world.

In 2023, the two organizations strengthened their partnership even further — and made history: On World Smile Day®, a holiday dedicated to spreading joy and happiness, we set a new GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title for the 'World's Largest Online Album of Smiling Mouths,' with 21,328.

Behind this initiative was a potentially lifesaving message: Every grin is gorgeous. Every snicker is a flicker of hope. Every smile deserves to be seen. And that just by sharing a happy moment, we can all bring something positive into the world.

And this wasn't even our only historic first in 2023. Earlier that year, Smile Train, Dentsply Sirona, and FDI World Dental Federation joined forces to develop the first-ever global standard protocols for digitalized cleft treatment. This groundbreaking initiative, aimed at enhancing the accuracy and efficacy of existing treatments, is not only a testament to the power of collaboration but also a beacon of hope for countless cleft-affected individuals.

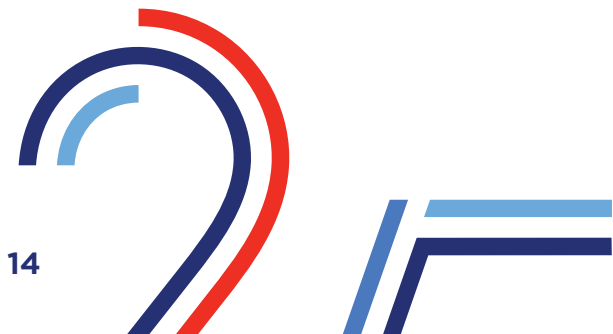


No less impressive, before the end of the year, Dentsply Sirona donated 500 oral health kits and educational flyers for children with clefts around the world.

Through donating their equipment to Smile Train partners and running global oral healthcare training and initiatives that have helped equip our local partner professionals with the skills needed to bring the highest standard of care to every Smile Train patient, Dentsply Sirona's focus on digitalizing cleft treatment is making a tangible impact for children with clefts every day.

To date, our partnership has supported more than 2,700 free, high-quality surgeries and touched the lives of children and families in need in 15 countries.

Dentsply Sirona's partnership with Smile Train is a powerful collaboration that's changing lives in Colombia and beyond. Discover how the integration of digital technology is revolutionizing cleft treatment and creating healthy smiles in the link below:





Haleon

Smile Train and Haleon joined forces in 2018 to significantly impact the lives of people with clefts. In the seven years since, our partnership has become a paradigm, a case study of the good that can be achieved when compassion meets impact.

In the initial phase of our collaboration, Smile Train and GSK Consumer Health agreed to a five-year partnership through 2022. It was a natural fit for two organizations with a shared belief that “healthier mouths lead to happier moments... and more smiles.” Together, we set ambitious goals for reaching more patients with lifesaving cleft surgeries, providing grants for training and educating healthcare workers in cleft care, supporting non-surgical comprehensive cleft care around the world, and activating cause-related marketing product campaigns in stores around the world.

GSK Consumer Health became Haleon in July 2022, and in early 2023, we took the monumental step of renewing our partnership for another two years, through December 2024.

From 2018 to 2023, Haleon supported 1,652 grants funding cleft care treatments in 93 countries, touching 54,135 patients and supporting more than 16,000 free local cleft surgeries. Beyond the operating room, the partnership provided the transportation and food that makes cleft care possible to 26,722 families; supported 11,300 non-surgical, comprehensive cleft care services; and trained 4,484 medical professionals in the essentials of treating children with clefts.

In total, Haleon’s partnership generously amounts to an impressive \$10,960,000 to Smile Train.

But our partnership is ultimately not just about numbers, it is about the generational impact we make together for families and healthcare workers around the world.





Dr. Mayuri Kalyanpad: From Patient to Doctor

She's been on the journey. Now she's dedicated to making the way easier for others.

Dr. Mayuri Kalyanpad from Maharashtra, India, was a Smile Train patient as a teenager and just became a doctor herself! In honor of International Women's Day, we asked this cleft heroine to share her story in her own words. She is our inspiration today and every day, and once you hear her story, we know she will be yours, too.

My cleft came as a surprise to my family because we have no history of clefts. We didn't have much money, but my father still saved every rupee he could to give me the surgeries I needed as a small child. I am forever grateful.

Though he did manage to pay for my initial cleft surgery, it did not happen at the earliest possible time. One of the side effects of that is that I struggled to speak until my parents dropped me off in preschool. Being around

other children all day turned out to be just the speech therapy I needed, and I learned to speak very fluently there.

I never really had trouble making friends as a child, but my nature has always been toward introversion, so I never felt sure whether people accepted me for who I am or not.

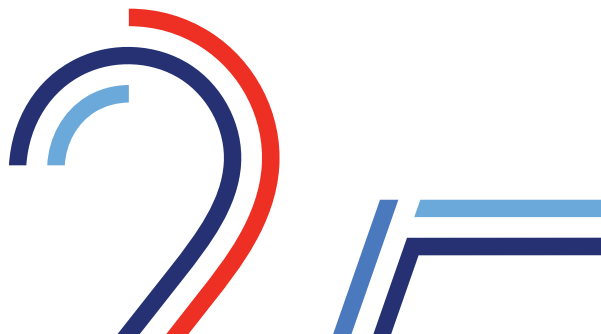
I only ran into problems when I went to boarding school for secondary school. There was discrimination there in favor of the "good-looking" students, and they just did not give me any attention as compared to others, no matter how bright I was.

My cleft also began causing problems for me outside of school at this time. I love chess, but my sports teacher wouldn't allow me to play at the national or even the local level. He always said you don't have medical fitness, so you can't play chess. The same thing happened with dance. I was good at dance (I love it now also!), but I couldn't do it in front of so many people; I would only do a few steps inside when no one was watching.

I always had issues with communication as well. One of my friends is a very great speaker. She can just go on and go on, so I asked her to speak for me when she's with me. Whenever we meet, I give responsibility to her to speak for the two of us.

It wasn't until I was in ninth grade that my doctor told my father about Smile Train. I still needed another surgery on my upper lip, so we went to Bembde Hospital, our local Smile Train partner, and were extremely happy with the results and grateful that it was free.

It is probably no accident that, the very next year, my father inspired me to change my focus from math to biology. I was always mad for mathematics and had spent my whole life wanting to be an engineer. But my father said that I was treated by really good doctors,





and not everyone is so lucky. My whole family agreed. It was a hard transition for me at first; math is all logic and calculations and biology felt to me like it is all made up, but I stuck with it and was thrilled when I was accepted into medical school.

I felt at home in medical school right away. Though there was no one else in my school with a cleft or any other kind of facial difference, all the people there knew about the condition and understood it, so I never had a problem making friends or getting along with my peers there.

I have just graduated as a doctor, and now I have a new ambition: to become a psychiatrist specializing in children with clefts at a Smile Train partner center in India.

As you can see from my story, the psychological issues I have faced because of my cleft have affected me just as much, if not more, than the physical ones. That happened in part because when I was growing up, we didn't have any psychological guidance for treating people with clefts; we didn't know how they affect your psychology. Yes, I knew something was going on in my mind, but I didn't know what.

Medical school really helped me to see that because it helped me grow so much. Before, I was so anxious to speak in front of people, but now I have the confidence to do it. I am also working on my communication and social skills and playing badminton with my friends when I get time. Yet, I know I am still the same person as I was in secondary school.

That means we can learn to grow beyond our nature. We just need someone to help us.

What would happen if every child with a cleft received counseling from a psychiatrist on how to develop their interests with confidence and be strong?

I mean, I'm still dealing with this, so I don't know the answers. But I want to help others focus on what they have now and not on what they didn't have in childhood.

And I want to do this as a Smile Train partner not only because they helped me, but also because their model so inspires me. Clefts are a problem everywhere on earth, but they affect people differently in different places depending on the local culture, availability of healthcare, and so much else.

By empowering local experts around the world to provide cleft care in their own communities, Smile Train helps make treatment better

everywhere on earth while allowing local staff to tailor programs to the unique needs of their region. That's something a medical mission trip from another country could never replicate, and it's particularly irreplaceable for psychological care.

In the summer of 2023, I was given a vision of what this model makes possible when I was invited to speak at Cleft Con India, probably the largest-ever gathering of Indians with clefts. Not only did I feel completely comfortable speaking in front of this group of strangers because I knew that we shared having a cleft, but I also learned so many new things about others' experiences, how they dealt with them, and how I can, too. It's so interesting that, though we all have clefts, we don't all share the same issues. Some people's problems are mostly financial, others are emotional, and everyone had something new to take from everyone else. That empowers you to implement the solutions others found if that same problem comes to your life.

I think that everyone left Cleft Con ready to really run further in life with their full strength. I came away feeling like I was floating on air.

And more determined than ever to give that feeling to every child with a cleft.

In honor of International Women's Day, I want to close with my advice for other girls with clefts:

There are so many big, bad things can happen to you, and this is just one thing that is affecting your life. You don't have to focus on this one thing. Yes, your cleft is probably a problem for you. But everybody has problems, and your cleft is a problem that can be treated. If you are feeling self-conscious, there are people — local Smile Train partners and a big cleft community — who are here to help you work through it. Never let it restrict you from being who you are or who you can be.

I also want to make sure to say thank you to Smile Train's donors. You are doing a great social good, giving health and confidence to people with clefts.



A Letter from Juan, a 10-Year-Old Patient from Chile

My name is Juan. I am from Isla de Maipo, Chile. I live with my dad, my mom, my dogs, and a rabbit. And I was born with a cleft.

I don't remember anything about my first years with my cleft. All I know is that when I was little, my parents found Fundación Gantz in Santiago, where I have gone for free treatment thanks to Smile Train ever since. Every time I go to Fundación Gantz, my parents support me. I thank them for that because it is not easy to arrive on time for checkups. We have to get up at six in the morning to drive for more than an hour in traffic and be careful not to get hit by other cars.

Fundación Gantz has helped me a lot. First, they healed my cleft lip. Then, with orthodontic treatment, they managed to correct my bite. And later, they will perform a jawbone surgery.

Today, when someone asks me what the little mark on my lip is, I tell them. It has never bothered me because it is so small that you can hardly see it.

In the past, children bullied me at school. I started training in taekwondo at the age of four in a gym next to my kindergarten and it was just what I needed at that time. Learning karate has also helped me. It made me more confident — before, children hit me, and now they respect me.

I had a friend once who was not really such a friend because he always hit me. I stayed friends with him because I was afraid of being alone, but he wasn't really my friend. Now, in karate, I have made several friends who, although they are not my age, I get along with well. Once, when I was in a ring, I was picked on by other kids and they stood up for me.

I don't tell my friends much about my achievements, but when they walk into my bedroom, they are amazed by the trophies I have. Then I tell them my story.



I like all the doctors who treat me, but one doctor is my favorite — she has known me since I was born. I also like the doctor who performs my orthodontic treatment. I have a plate in my mouth for my orthodontics. It used to leave a bad taste in my mouth every time I removed it, and the doctor managed to make me no longer feel that sensation. I don't know how he did it. It's impressive.

Once we met a family at Gantz who had forgotten an orthodontic appliance, and the patient's mother was very sad. Since I no longer had to use it, my mom offered mine to her and in this way, we were able to help a family and make them happy.

As I said, I'm now doing orthodontic treatment to have good teeth. I notice the progress in my treatments, especially with the teeth that are now straight. I think that with all the treatment I'm doing, I'll have a beautiful smile.

When I grow up, I would like to go to university and study mechanics. I would also like to be a truck driver because they are paid well and I find it fun to drive a loaded trailer. I would also like to have children.

I want to tell the professionals at Gantz to keep it up because their work is super good, and they help a lot of people who need it.

To someone who is beginning with orthodontics, I would tell him not to be afraid, that nothing bad will happen. Sometimes it could hurt a little, but in the end, they will have super nice teeth.

I also want to thank my parents for all the help they have given me throughout my treatment. Thanks to everything they do for me, I am a happy child.



At 65, My Dad Can Now Savor Life

Hello, my name is Julian. I live with my family in the small village of Zotiglopé, in Togo. I am the oldest son of Edoh, a man who lived with an untreated cleft for 65 years before he received a surgery that healed it for free from a local hospital thanks to Smile Train and you, their extremely generous donors around the world.

It's not easy to say all that your gift has meant to our entire family and there is nothing I could possibly do to repay your kindness. The only thing I have to give you is my father's story, which I will share with you now. It is my hope that it will help you see what life, what freedom, what exceptional kindness you've given to my father and to our whole family.



If you are to understand our story, the first thing you must know is that in our culture, everyone believes a cleft is a curse from the voodoo gods. My grandmother — my father's mother — also had a cleft, so when my father was born, everyone thought the curse must be very strong on our family.

As a child, Dad was mocked and made fun of mercilessly. Other children called him names and started fights with him. Families were not required to send their children to school then, so he never went — it would have been too dangerous for him.

But you don't need to go to school to learn smarts, and my dad has always been a smart man. He had to be. When he was picked on, he defended himself by telling his bullies that if they kept calling him names, the voodoo would bring their curses back on their own heads like a boomerang.

It worked — they left him alone.

Name calling was only one of the difficulties Dad faced. He also struggled to eat and drink because food would fall out of his mouth and people would stare. No one would share the same cup or plate with him, and that hurt him deeply. Just imagine growing up seeing your father treated as a pariah every time he eats! But Dad is not only smart, he is also strong. He told me that no matter how down he was feeling, he refused to see himself as a sick person.

In all his 65 years with a cleft, he never wavered on his right to live with dignity. My brother and sisters and I owe our lives to his perseverance: He got married and had children after years of insult and heartbreak because he never stopped believing that he had just as much a right to these things as everybody else. He believes he found his first wife because of promises and secret rituals he made to the gods, but I think it owes a lot to his own strength, too.

Though I did not inherit my father's cleft, I am fortunate that I inherited his persistence. Being the child of a man with a cleft is very difficult. In school, my classmates mocked me all the time because of his cleft. All village gatherings and business were very difficult for the whole family.

Every family in Zotiglopé has their own god, but we did not. So when my little brother was born with a cleft, we brought a god home and started worshiping it in the hopes of annulling the decree against our family. I cannot describe here the exact nature of the rituals we performed. They are a secret, and even if I were to describe them, you would not understand them.

Some people think that cultures that believe in voodoo do not accept modern medicine, but that is not true! Dad always knew that cleft surgery was possible, he just never pursued it for himself because he never had any money to afford it and he thought that as an old man already, it wouldn't make any difference for him anyway.

But naturally, many things that are okay for you are not acceptable when they happen to your child. Shortly after my brother was born, a big hospital boat docked in Togo offering free medical services, including cleft surgeries. My sister told me about it, and I took my brother right away. He got the surgery, but Dad was out of town at the time. By the time he got back, that ship had sailed. He was disappointed, but took it in his usual stride.



No one thought much more about treatment for Dad until one day Mr. Abi, our village head, approached him and said representatives from an organization called Smile Train had visited him with flyers and told him anyone he knew with a cleft could receive surgery for free at our nearest hospital.

Dad didn't believe him. He said, "I am too old. I have lived my whole life with a cleft, what difference does it make if I have the surgery?"

But Mr. Abi is just as strong-willed as my father! When he heard he didn't want to go, both he and the village chief came to discuss the matter with him, but Dad still did not believe them. It took Mr. Abi three separate visits to convince

him, and he only agreed after Mr. Abi told him that if he got the surgery, all the mockery would stop; it would be like pressing a reset button on his entire life.

And that was the truth! I've never seen Dad so happy as he's been since his surgery. It really was as though his life began again at age 65!

Now, from the time he wakes up in the morning to the time he goes to sleep, Dad is always smiling. The surgery has changed him in other ways too, ways you would never expect. He's discovered how good food can taste. I guess he wasn't able to taste so well before with food always falling out of his mouth, but now that he no longer has to worry about that, he enjoys food so much he licks the flavors off each one of his fingers after meals just so he can savor it longer!

I think my entire family owes Mr. Abi everything. If it wasn't for his perseverance, Dad wouldn't have gone for the surgery. For the future, I can say that we are proud to have a father who has overcome something that we never thought was possible to overcome. The story of how he and all of us overcame something as big as having a cleft after living with it for so many years will now be part of our family history forever.

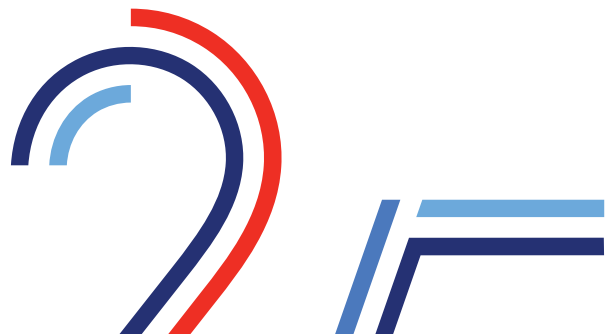
Of course, we also owe everything to those who donated to help pay for Dad's surgery. You are forever part of our story too, which is why I wanted to share it with you. To every Smile Train donor, our whole family prays for blessings for every in all your endeavors, in your businesses, in your health, that whatever you embark on will be a success. I am so happy you were able to help my dad.

Blessings of peace from Edoh, Julian, and their family.

Our family is free now and we are free as well.

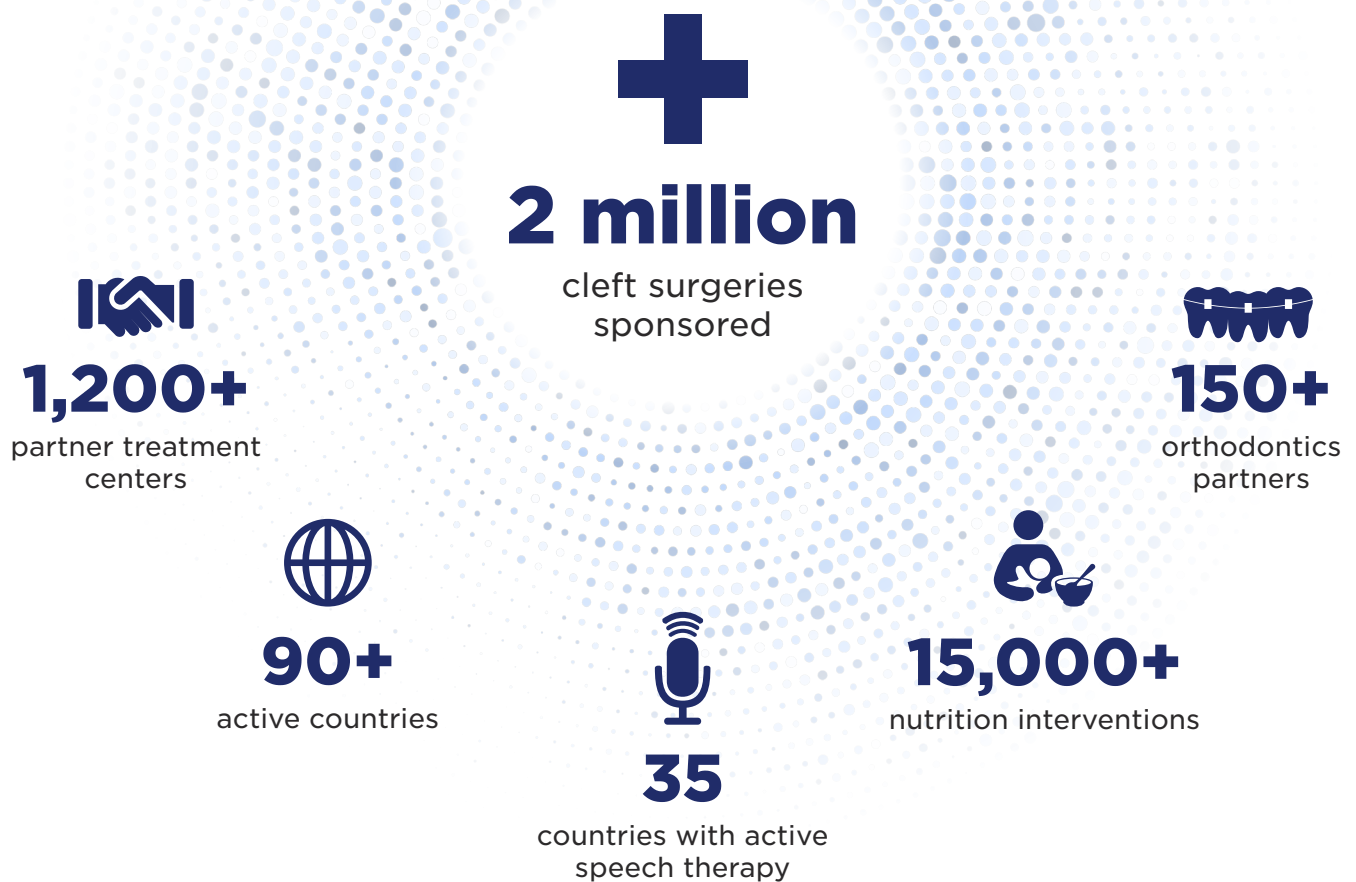
Our bottomless thanks,


Julian





Our Impact Over the Last 25 Years

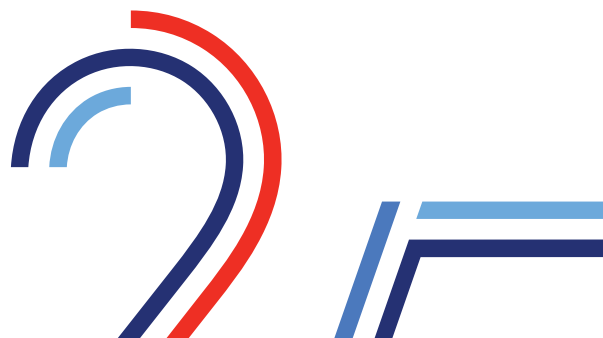


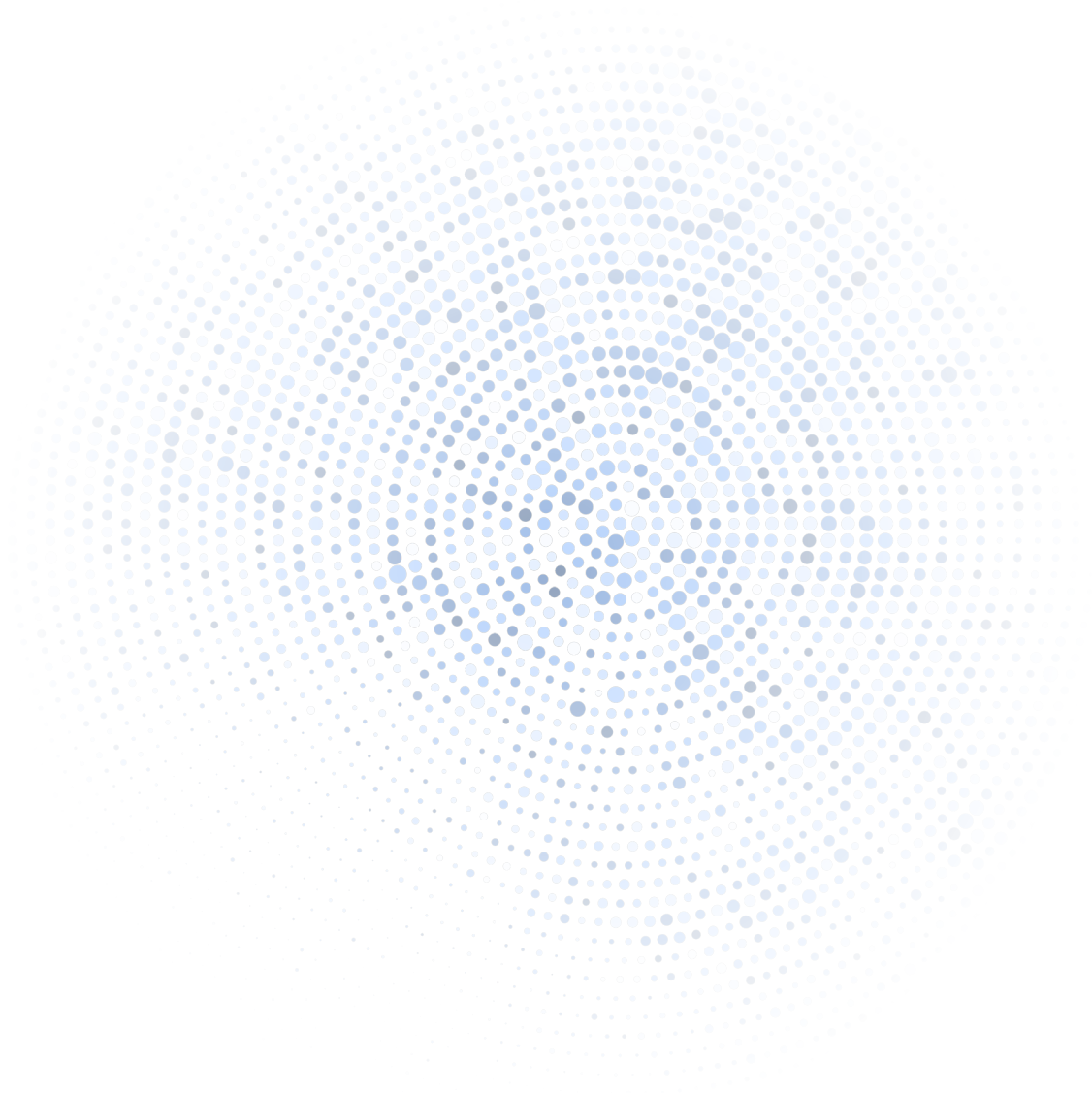


All of our successes since our founding in 1999 stem from two sources: the world-changing vision of Charles B. Wang and the tireless commitment of donors like you.

Thank you for helping us light up the world with smiles for the last 25 years and beyond.







Transforming Lives &
Global Cleft Care For 25 Years



Smile Train is a leader in efficiency, transparency, and impact. Smile Train is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit recognized by the IRS, and all donations to Smile Train are tax-deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.

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