



Celebrating Everyday Heroes: Kathleen Magee

# Magee Brings Smiles To Children

*A mission to the Phillipines inspires American woman to provide surgeries to children in developing countries*

In 1981, Kathleen Magee worked on a **medical mission to the Philippines**. She was surprised and disgusted by what she found. The hospital conditions were terrible, and there were many more sick children than she expected.

The mission group did the best they could, performing surgeries and repairing the children's *deformities* (when a body part is not formed the way it should be, it is called a deformity). Originally, the group planned to work only on mouth deformities, but children came with burns, *tumors* (a tumor is an unusually large swelling of blood, body fluid or body tissue) and other

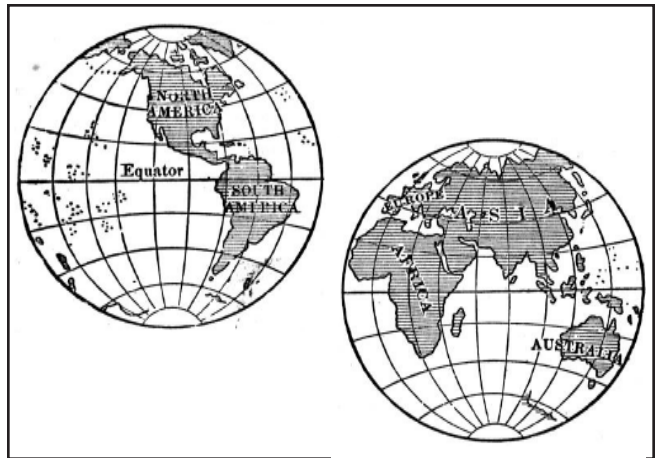
deformities they were born with or which resulted from a disease. **The team saw 150 children during the five-day trip, but they had to turn away another 250 children that needed help.**

**What?**  
What happened in the story?  
**What problem**  
was Kathy concerned about?

*This time, their team treated 200 patients, but hundreds more still needed their help. Kathy knew she must return again, and decided to form Operation Smile.*

## Kathy Vows To Return

Kathy promised the people she would be back. Her husband was a *plastic surgeon* (a doctor who changes the look and structure of body parts for medical and



visual purposes), and he wanted to come back as well. After raising money from bake sales and collecting donated medical supplies, Kathy and her husband returned to the Philippines. This time, their team treated 200 patients, but hundreds more still needed their help. Kathy knew she must return again, and decided to form *Operation Smile*.

## Operation Smile Reaches 21 Developing Nations

*Operation Smile* officially began in 1982. The goal of the organization is to provide **corrective surgeries to children** who are unable to afford them. Today, 21 developing countries are the targets for *Operation Smile's* mission trips. These include **Vietnam, Kenya, Thailand, Venezuela, Ecuador, Columbia, Brazil, China, Russia, Jordan, Peru, Bolivia, Morocco, Cambodia, the Philippines, Honduras, Nicaragua, Romania and India.** Tens of

**So What?**  
What gifts did Kathy use to help her efforts succeed? What character traits did Kathy demonstrate?

thousands of children and young adults around the world and in the United States have been treated by *Operation Smile* teams.

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## **Operation Smile Is A Labor Of Love For Organizer**

**Kathy is determined to help as many children as she can.** She is very active in the organization, but does not receive a paycheck. While she works as many as

12-15 hours a day, Kathy volunteers all her time. Her days can be spent on **fundraising, writing letters and organizing the volunteers** that are essential to *Operation Smile*.

**In 1999, Kathy was awarded the Hannah Neil Center World of Children Award.**

Many new people heard about *Operation Smile* and decided to help. With the prize money that accompanied her award, Kathy was able to provide education and training to health care professionals around the world.

**Kathy will not feel that Operation Smile has reached its goal until every child can smile freely.** To her, children are exceptionally valuable to the world.

She says, "The lives of children are ever so important in this day and age. **Children are truly the only language that translates across all countries.**"

## **Now What Could You And Your Friends Do To Help?**

Now that you have read about Kathy Magee and her work to make medical care available to disadvantaged children, what

could you and your classmates do to make a difference? Just like Kathy, there are people everywhere making a difference. Can you find an *Everyday Hero* in your community who is making a difference by providing health care to disadvantaged children? Let us know what you and others in your community are doing by posting your information on [www.partnershipsmakeadifference.org](http://www.partnershipsmakeadifference.org).

For more information about child health care and other related issues, log on to . . .

*Operation Smile:* [www.operationsmile.org](http://www.operationsmile.org)

*Columbus Children's Hospital:*

[www.childrenscolumbus.org](http://www.childrenscolumbus.org)

*Doctors Without Borders:*

[www.doctorswithoutborders.org](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org)

*Emergency Medical Services for Children:*

[www.ems-c.org](http://www.ems-c.org)

In addition, you may find these sites helpful:

*World of Children:* [www.WorldOfChildren.org](http://www.WorldOfChildren.org)

*Partnerships Make A Difference:*

[partnershipsmakeadifference.org](http://partnershipsmakeadifference.org)

*United Nations Children's Fund:* [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

*Children's Defense Fund:* [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

**So What?**  
What difference did it make that Kathy chose to get involved in this issue?

**Now What?**  
What could happen next?  
What could you and your class do to make a difference in your world?