

# spreading smiles around the world

DRS. JAMIE DIAMENT-GOLUB AND JON GOLUB LEAD HUMANITARIAN DENTAL VISITS

**W**ife and husband Drs. Jamie Diament-Golub and Jon Golub, a pediatric dentist and orthodontist, respectively, travel to remote areas of the world with a group of volunteers to deliver free dental care to children.

Diament-Golub, who is part of Pediatric Dentistry in Fort Lee and Westwood, began these trips about 10 years ago when, as a faculty member at Columbia University's dental school, she was asked to accompany a group to Jamaica. Her husband, the in-house orthodontist at her practice, joined her a few years later when their children were off to college. Now they take four or five trips a year to Cambodia, Cape Verde, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Mongolia and the Philippines.

Health Care International takes them to Jamaica to treat kids and adults, while Kids International Dental Services serves children in a wide range of countries.

"It's basic dental care because it's very remote, very rustic areas of the world," Golub says. "A real basic hurdle over there is the areas we're going to don't necessarily have electricity. Some don't have running water."

Diament-Golub says one of the hardest things is finding their connection in the countries.

"Without a liaison, you can't get to these places where we're going and have some kind of sustainability," she says. "In other words, who's going to fluorinate the kids every six months when we're not there? Who's going to make sure the kids are brushing their teeth and eating healthy foods and not having candy and soda all day long?"



**GLOBAL CARE** Dr. Jamie Diament-Golub and her husband, Dr. Jon Golub, pose with children in Cambodia after treating their teeth.

Golub says they hope that when they leave the communities better understand the link between sugary foods and drinks and poor dental hygiene, so that "the next generation of kids being raised can be improved."

They enjoy seeing some long-term results, especially in Cambodia where they visit the same orphanage every year and have dental histories for all the kids.

"It might go back four or five years and you can see the first year is red all over the chart showing cavities," Golub says. "By the time the kids are maybe 14 or 15 and the permanent teeth have erupted, they have perfect dentitions because these kids have been in the program for a number of years and the orphanage has really taken on the instruction for when we're not there."

They've seen a lot of these kids leave the orphanage for college, thanks to the orphanage's fundraising efforts. Along the way, a lot of their patients help the dentists as translators.

"We'll take a group of them and go off to the countryside and have them explain to the other young children that we're there to help them," Golub says.

"When they return, these kids feel so great about themselves."

Having a committed group of volunteers also makes the trips possible and more efficient.

"We bring [Pediatric Dentistry] staff members with us. We brought about a dozen friends from Bergen County who asked if they could help. We said, 'You can teach kids how to brush their teeth. You can brush their teeth with fluoride. You can line them up for us.'" Diament-Golub says. "We're seeing about 2,000 kids a week. There's a lot of orchestration with the kids before they even get to see a dentist."

In addition to local volunteers, they also bring students from Columbia and Tufts University, where Diament-Golub also teaches.

"Not only do they get to learn, but there's a certain amount of sustainability there," she says. "We need young people to take over our organization as the founders get older and older. So we try to turn the dental students on to the idea of volunteerism and incorporating that into their careers and lives." ●

— SAM PASSOW