

PAUL HARRIS FELLOW

Georgina Cosentino

The Rotary Club of Ancaster recognizes Georgina Cosentino as a Paul Harris Fellow. She exemplifies the Rotary motto "Service Above Self" in her vocation and in the local and world community.

Born and educated in Hamilton, Georgina took further studies at the University of Western Ontario to qualify as a Preventive Dental Assistant. She has worked as a dental assistant in the Hamilton and Burlington area for over 30 years.

An active member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Hamilton, Georgina has been a volunteer with the Brothers of the Good Shepherd helping those in most need in the community. She has two daughters, Andrea, 26, at the University of British Columbia and Deano, 24, a pharmaceutical technician at the Hamilton General Hospital.

Her journey to become the "Toothbrush Lady" began in 2000 when daughter Andrea told her about the poor living conditions of Haitians living in Dominican Republic. Georgina and her family sponsored a Haitian child through Christian Child Care International. In October 2001 Georgina visited Haiti for the first time and saw the appalling conditions and plight of this poor country's inhabitants. She was shocked at the high rate of dental disease that was preventable.

Resolved to do something about the situation, Georgina founded "Healthy Smiles for Haiti" with the objective of providing toothbrushes and teaching preventive care to Haitian children, raising funds to supply instruments, equipment and supplies for dental clinics, and assisting Haitian dentists to treat poor patients. By September 2007, she has taught a total of 8,519 students and given them toothbrushes (collected by local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides and others,) making two or three trips every year.

Georgina also partnered with the Rotary Clubs of Burlington North and Mississauga-Meadowville in Ontario and the Jacmel Club in Haiti and other donors to establish a dental clinic in Thibeau that opened in September 2007. Earlier in 2004, she helped set up a dental clinic in Les Palmes partnering with Christian Child Care International and other donors: She hopes to set up further dental clinics. In addition to bringing containers of dental supplies and equipment to these two clinics, Georgina has brought donated dental supplies to Hopital Albert Schweitzer and donated medical supplies to a new medical clinic in Grand Goave. She has recently partnered with Health Partners International, a Canadian charity that gathers needed pharmaceuticals and dental products for countries in need.

Passionate and enthusiastic about this cause, Georgina also organizes annual fund-raising dances and silent auctions, enlists the help of other volunteers, maintains a "Healthy Smiles for Haiti" website, sells Haitian Note-Cards donated by Hamilton artist Anna Sponer and even had 19 dental assistant runners in the 'Road to Hope' fundraiser this past weekend, the day after she left with dental supplies on another trip to Haiti using her vacation time, and thereby missing this presentation. This is just another example of this volunteer's 'Service Above Self'.

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