

# Local Rotarians participate in yet another Rotaplast Mission

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Azeb is a 26 year old mother living in Ethiopia. She has a grade nine education and her sister has been providing for her and her one year old child. Azeb was abandoned by her husband because their child had a facial deformity. She and her husband had a shop where they both worked, but the husband sold everything they owned and disappeared. Now that her son Yeabsira has had corrective surgery through a Rotaplast mission, Azeb is excited about his prospects. She is now planning to work in an Arab nation and to provide for an education for her son so that he can become an outstanding engineer. This is just one of many heart-warming stories that has illustrated how Rotaplast has given families and children hope, self-sufficiency and dignity.



This story was experienced and shared by club member and Director of the Foundation Committee, Tom Patterson, who participated in an exciting humanitarian service adventure as a member of a Rotaplast team that provided reconstructive plastic surgery and dental work to children born with cleft lip and palate anomalies in the capital city of Addis Abba in Ethiopia from September 16-27 in 2012.



As the quartermaster for the team, Tom was responsible to ensure that the equipment and supplies from the San Francisco office arrived in Ethiopia in a timely manner, was processed through customs, and was then delivered to the hospital where the surgeries were to take place. During the

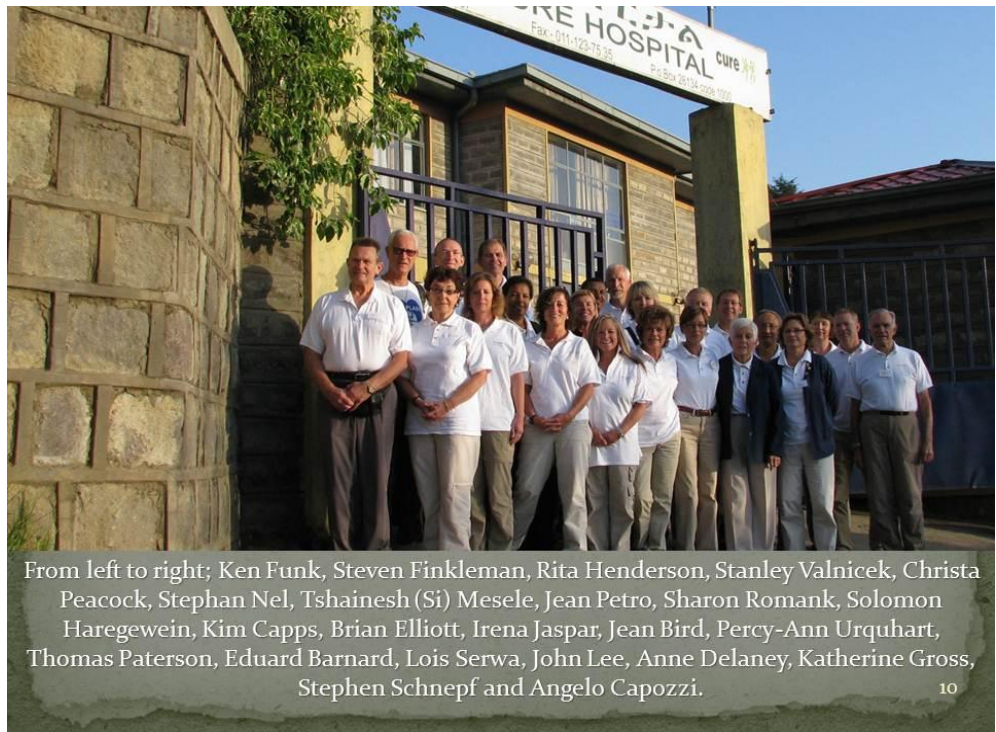
mission, Tom was required to secure additional supplies and materials for the medical team from local suppliers. At the end of the mission he was then required to re-pack the boxes of equipment and supplies and be sure that they were returned to the San Francisco office. Tom points out that his responsibilities were carried out with some difficulty. In particular, problems with customs resulted in the medical equipment being tied-up in customs for three days. The equipment was finally released with the assistance of Addis East Rotarians. Fortunately, while the team waited for the equipment, Cure Hospital, the hospital where they provided the humanitarian medical surgeries were performed, lent the team their equipment and supplies.



The Rotaplast team consisted of Canadian and American Rotarians and medical staff, with the majority of these members from the Okanagan area. The humanitarian mission was labeled a “mini-mission” as the team consisted of only 23 members compared to 35 which is generally the full contingent for a Rotaplast mission. As a result, only two operating rooms were utilized rather than three; and the program involved eight days of surgery rather than ten.



Dr. Anne R. Delaney, a plastic surgeon who works for Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in San Rafael, California, also serving as a board member of Rotaplast International, served as the team’s Medical Director; while Ken Funk, a Rotarian from Abbotsford, served as the Mission Director. Jean Bird, a member of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Mission and director of Rotaplast Canada, served as the Assistant Mission Director on this mission. Through their guidance, the team was able to process over 91 patients and to perform 58 surgeries and 62 procedures. Dr. Stan Valnicek from Kelowna was thrilled to work alongside Dr. Angelo Capozzi, the co-founder and medical director of Rotaplast International during the mission.



From left to right; Ken Funk, Steven Finkleman, Rita Henderson, Stanley Valnicek, Christa Peacock, Stephan Nel, Tshainesh (Si) Mesele, Jean Petro, Sharon Romank, Solomon Haregewein, Kim Capps, Brian Elliott, Irena Jaspar, Jean Bird, Percy-Ann Urquhart, Thomas Paterson, Eduard Barnard, Lois Serwa, John Lee, Anne Delaney, Katherine Gross, Stephen Schnepf and Angelo Capozzi. 10

As mentioned, the Rotaplast team operated out of Cure Hospital which was established in 2008. The hospital is a state-of-the-art 60 bed complex located right in Addis Ababa. According to a source, Tom was informed that the hospital has twelve private beds available for people who pay for their operations. With the paid operations for one day per week and with money that the hospital receives from a non-government organization (Smile Train), the hospital is then enabled to fund charity operations for the other six days of the week.

In a presentation to the members of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise on January 11, 2013, Tom Patterson described the work of the Ethiopian Rotaplast mission, shared heart-warming stories of surgeries that transformed the lives of many young people from Addis Ababa and from neighbouring communities, and provided an overview of the country and its peoples. It was an experience that Tom will cherish for many years to come and one that continues to inspire him in his work in humanitarian service for the less fortunate people in our world.

Rotaplast Canada is a non-profit humanitarian organization that provides free reconstructive plastic surgery, dental treatments and speech therapy to children and at times to adults born with cleft lip, cleft palate and associated deformities in developing countries. Rotaplast Canada is an affiliate of Rotaplast International which operationalizes the Rotaplast Canada missions. Rotaplast International was formed in 1992 and continues to be based in San Francisco.

Through the generous support of Rotarians, Rotary Clubs, individual, organizational and corporate donors, Rotaplast Canada has now in its ninth year of operation provided financial and volunteer support for missions to the Philippines, India, Chile, China, Vietnam, and Ethiopia (3 times) which has changed the lives of over 600 children. Rotaplast Canada was registered as a charitable organization with the government of Canada in 2004 by members of the Okanagan Mission Rotary Club in Kelowna, British Columbia.