

Azerbaijan Dental Clinic

In January 2009, a dental clinic serving poor Azerbaijani children, opened in a suburb of Baku, Azerbaijan treating several orphans from the nearby Serai Orphanage. A six-year international effort by Rotarians of six clubs from three countries fulfilled a dream of humanitarian and Rotarian Dan Gornell, a retired USAF Officer and banker from Colorado Springs. Six years earlier in May of 2003, Dr. Wayne Lopez, a dentist from the Westbrook-Gorham Rotary club, spent two weeks in Baku with Mr. Gornell, his wife Barbara, and Dr. Ian Carpenter, a dentist from New Zealand and his wife Suzanne, in helping to plan the project.

Dr.

Dr. Lopez, Dan Gornell, Dr Ian Carpenter, Barbara Gornell, and Suzanne Carpenter at the May 2003 planning session

Upon returning home to Maine, Dr. Lopez with encouragement from his Rotary club and the Greater Portland Dental Society applied for and received his club's first Rotary Foundation Grant. An essential requirement of any International Rotary Grant, the partnership of a Rotary club of the host country was achieved through the cooperation of Baku's then only club headed by Dr Ron D'Mello, an Indian physician practicing in Azerbaijan. His and several other Baku Rotarians intimate involvement continues to add to the success of this international cooperative project. The original \$25,000 Rotary Grant, applied to the purchase of major dental equipment turned out to be just the start. Five years have passed and several other grants currently totaling over \$80,000 have been received helping with preventive and treatments costs as well as additional equipment purchases. The Rotary grant goal of equipping two treatment rooms and purchasing one mobile unit has been realized.

Azerbaijan is a country about the size of the state of Maine but with eight times the population (eight million+). A war with Armenia in 1990 just after Azerbaijan had gained independence from Russia has left over a million people displaced. The original intent of this dental clinic was to serve the children included in this group, focusing on the city of Sumgaiyet, which had a very high density of displaced persons. Finding a secure space at this location with water, sewerage, and electricity proved futile for several years. This, combined with bureaucratic delays in licensing further frustrated our original time-line. Finally, another humanitarian organization, the Caspian Compassion Project (CCP) which has provided eye care for the poor for over 10 years in the Baku area, offered space in their new expanded facility in Masisir, a small city placed strategically between Baku and Sumgaiyet. It was the perfect match and the CCP-Rotary dental clinic opened to

treat local area orphanage children in January of 2009.

The new CCP ophthalmologic and dental clinic as seen in seen in June 2009 with Rotary van

Although we will provide continuing care to the nearby Serai orphanage children, our close proximity to Sumgaiyet with an available van that the Rotary grant purchased, will allow the clinic soon to expand it's range to include our original target children in Sumgaiyet. By gaining the other grants, secured by Mr. Gornell, we have been provided with funds sufficient to treat additional patients free for the immediate future.

We have kept our operating expenses low initially by utilizing the volunteer provider services of Dr. Akif Aliev, a local Azerbaijani dentist, and of visiting American dentists, Dr. Lopez and his close friend Dr. Daniel Fielding, a Maryland dentist who accompanied Dr. Lopez on the June 2009 trip.

Local instructor Dr. Akif and our new resident Dr. Mahira consulting with visiting US dentist Dr. Fielding

Besides providing patient services, Dr Lopez has also provided consulting services at his two recent visits in June and September of 2009 helping to start a dental residency, a recent goal of the project. An excellent model has been established in the adjoining CCP eye clinic, which graduated two ophthalmology residents during Dr. Lopez's September visit. A dental residency will help provide the missing clinical experience not provided in the current curriculum of the Azerbaijan Dental School. Dr. Mahira Musayeva, a recent graduate, initially employed to oversee the clinic is also now serving as its first resident while Dr. Akif Aliev is now employed as its first instructor. It is now Dr. Lopez's goal to involve other U.S. dentists in this project and thereby increasing it's treatment and educational capacity.