



photo courtesy of rachel donaldson



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SMILES THAT GO ON

[FOR MILES]

by emily dunn

When she was younger, senior Rachel Donaldson received her first "smile," a \$240 donation that covered the cost of a cleft palate reconstructive surgery for a child in need as a Christmas present from her parents. Donaldson then became interested in Operation Smile, an organization that raised money and awareness of cleft palate, a facial deformity that affected many children around the world.

"Every child has an amazing potential that is being hidden away because of a facial deformity that can easily be fixed," Donaldson said. "I have been able to see the remarkable transformation that reconstructive surgery brings to children born with cleft palates first hand with a dear friend, and have seen the joy that he has, and I want to be able to give the joy and opportunity to other kids around the world who do not have the money or

medical services to do so."

Starting the summer before her senior year, Donaldson attended an International Student Leadership Conference in Ireland where she learned what it would take to participate in Operation Smile. Following that, Donaldson applied for Mission Training where she would receive the official location of her mission trip sponsored by Operation Smile. From there, Donaldson was sent on a two week mission trip to the Philippines where she educated students about basic health care, entertained hospital patients, and even got to sit in on surgeries.

"I became a part of this organization because I truly believe in the work that is being done, and know that lives are being changed forever on every mission. There is nothing better than literally bringing smiles to children's faces across the world," Donaldson said.

On her mission to the Philippines, Donaldson got to work closely with patients

inside the hospitals and see firsthand what her work was producing. On her third day there, Donaldson got the chance to talk with Bill Magee, co-founder of Operation Smile, who gave her some words of advice that stuck with her.

"He talked to me and said 'This makes you realize how blessed you are, right?' It was an incredible moment to be with patients whose lives had been changed, and the person who had started this whole thing. It was really surreal," Donaldson said.

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-Rachel Donaldson [12]

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