

Non-Profits join medical and dental efforts in Uganda

BY JENNY LIND CONLEE, TUALATIN LIFE

As she hiked the Uganda-Rwanda border, Dr. Julie Spaniel looked out over the mountains and knew this was her next stop in serving the world. That was in the Fall of 2018, and the dental philanthropist took a month off to travel while her office, Summerwood Dental, was under renovation. She traveled to Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, scouting service opportunities in East Africa; searching for where she can be of the most help. More than a dentist, Dr. Julie is a lover of people. Her kindness, knowledge and expertise combined with her respect for other cultures makes her exceptional at what she does. She carries within her a burning desire to serve others, and that fiery passion is contagious.

Then, something extraordinary happened.



Dental students assist Dr. Spaniel and provide oral hygiene and education to the people of the village.

At a Tualatin Rotary meeting, she met Mr. Gian Luca Gamberini. This chance meeting turned into a profound connection. As they got to know each other, he told her of his wife, Dr. Olivia Kamayangi. Dr. Olivia is not only a physician who works in Portland for Providence Health Systems, but hails from Kakore, Uganda. In fact, the village she is from was just on the other side of that ridge where Dr. Julie was hiking on the Uganda-Rwanda border. The couple have a non-profit organization, Kigezi Women and Children Healthcare Initiative. Their organization's mission is to elevate the dignity

of women in rural Uganda. They do this through medical care, and assisting in getting the local crafts to market and education. "I was born and raised in Uganda, and I felt an obligation to give back. We provide women with skills to build a better future," says Dr. Olivia, "...as well as preventative health discussion about hygiene, nutrition, and dehydration for which we are providing the women with oral rehydration packets. We also introduced the concept of micro gardens and provided solar panels to 129 families," adds Gian Luca.

The result of these generous and knowledgeable people coming together has turned into a partnership. Through Gian Luca and Dr. Olivia's non-profit, Kigezi Women and Children Healthcare Initiative and Dr. Julie's non-profit, Summerwood Dental Brigades, they're creating a joint effort to provide medical and dental care to the Ugandan village Dr. Olivia is from. This upcoming venture will take place July 31 - August 11 and also serve to set-up infrastructure for future brigades. This partnership is definitely what Dr. Julie calls "a win-win." "There is very minimal healthcare. There is zero dental care. This collaboration is providing service that is lacking," says Dr. Olivia about this upcoming partnership.

Dr. Julie enjoys partnering with colleges to take students and as she says, "open up their eyes to the spirit of service." She hopes to take students on future trips to assist with extractions and periodontal work. She and Dr. Olivia will leave the mid-level Ugandan providers with medications like antibiotics and other useful tools as well.

You have two amazing opportunities to meet these extraordinary individuals and hear more about what they're doing and how you can support these efforts. On **May 8**, the dynamic team will present their plans to the



Dr. Olivia Kamayangi (left) and Dr. Julie Spaniel.



Tigard Rotary. On **May 16, from 5-7pm**, they'll be having a wine and cheese fundraiser hosted at the Summerwood Dental office. This is a great chance to learn more about their work, catch the vision, support and encourage this great effort.

For More information, please see summerwooddentalbrigades.org and kigeziwomen.org.



Jenny is a wife and mom of twins. She enjoys storytelling through writing, song, comedy and speaking on stage. Her writing is featured on Sheology.co, Joy of It and Portland Moms Blog. You can follow her adventures at jenny lindconlee.com.