

Let your smile shine bright

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We asked JB to show us his best smile and he didn't hesitate.

It's Sunday morning, and I'm getting ready for morning service. But on this one particular Sunday, I am not headed to my local church, but to a hospital instead. Enthusiastic security guards greet me as people walk through large glass doors. I hear the guitar playing with occasional crying and giggling in the background. Tebow CURE Hospital is filled with babies, children, and their parents. All of them are gathered in one place for one reason: healing.



Jeannie holds Ramon with excitement as she looks forward to his cleft palate surgery.

As an orthopedic specialty hospital, we focus more on bone surgery, but we get into the mix of plastic surgery to children born with cleft lip and palate. In partnership with Smile Train, we put together a "Cleft Camp Week" solely for children who need reconstructive surgery for their cleft lip and palate. For the most recent week, over 40 kids were present for screening and we admitted 31 kids for surgery.



Nathaniel patiently waits for his turn to become cleft-lip free!

That's 31 children in one week. Next door to my office is a room where families, who live hours away, stay as they wait to be admitted in the following days. Toys are all over the floor, kids are chasing each other, and there's that smell of dirty diapers, which later disappears. When toddlers stop by our office to say, "Oy," many of the kids already carry a smile and hope to have an even brighter smile after surgery. We try to convince them not to share a grin as they heal, but when joy oozes out, there's nothing you can do.



After all the photos are taken of Nathaniel before surgery, he tries to snag the camera for his turn to snap pictures.

The Free-to-Smile team and our medical staff together work early mornings and go home after dinner to be ready for another surgery the next day. For a week, everyone works together to make life-changing surgeries happen.

Jialyn, a patient's mom says, "I'm really happy that Khane is having surgery at a young age. I hope that people will stop bullying him for his disability once his lip is repaired."



Khane gets cozy in the ward after admission.

I mention that many already carry a bright smile despite their disability, but some smiles are a bit hidden due to being bullied at home. Now that Khane's lip is reconstructed, we pray that his new smile shines bright to his old bullies as they go about their day.



Post surgery, Khane walks around with grandma to catch bubbles.

At the end of each long surgery, we not only think that we give a better physical outlook for the children, but also a hope and brighter smile in the future.

I may not have been in a church building that Sunday morning when Cleft Camp started, but every day that week, I saw the church—a group of believers in Christ in action—serve our guests and use our God-given gifts to show Christ's love to those in need.



We partnered with Smile Train and Free to Smile to perform 31 surgeries in one week!