

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



THE MISS UNIVERSE ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL CLEFT CHARITY SMILE TRAIN TO INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT THE SEVERITY OF CLEFT LIP AND PALATE

Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach to Visit Local Smile Train Partners in the Philippines to Kick Off Partnership

NEW YORK, NY – January 19, 2016 – The Miss Universe Organization and [Smile Train](#), the world’s largest cleft charity, today announced a new charitable partnership to help raise awareness of the issues faced by children living with unrepaired clefts in the developing world. The new relationship will provide opportunities for the reigning Miss Universe and international titleholders to get involved with Smile Train’s global initiatives in the 85+ countries where the charity helps children.

"We truly believe in what Smile Train represents – hope, joy, perseverance and transformation," said Paula M. Shugart, President of The Miss Universe Organization. "We are extremely proud to work with an organization that is committed to delivering a positive impact to the communities in which we work, and are steadfast in our commitment to help support their efforts and long-term sustainability."

Millions of children in developing countries with unrepaired clefts live in shame, but more importantly, have difficulty eating, breathing and speaking. Cleft repair surgery is simple, and the transformation is immediate. Smile Train's sustainable model provides training and funding to empower local doctors in the developing world to provide 100%-free cleft repair surgery in their own communities. Since its founding in 1999, Smile Train has provided more than one million cleft repair surgeries across the world.

"We are honored to be a new official charity partner of The Miss Universe Organization to raise awareness for the vital cause of cleft lip and palate repair and related treatment," said Susannah Schaefer, CEO, Smile Train. "We hope that this relationship will help us mobilize supporters, both new and old, by leveraging The Miss Universe Organization’s incredible voice and helping to transform lives in the process."

The partnership will amplify a shared set of core values, centered on the organizations' global reach and commitment to empowering children to lead full, productive lives.

To kick-off these efforts, Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach will have the opportunity to meet with Smile Train’s Country Director for the Philippines, Kimmy Flaviano, while she is visiting Manila next week. Wurtzbach will learn more about the organization’s efforts and Smile Train’s local partners who are on the ground helping cleft patients 365 days a year.

"I look forward to my homecoming next week and helping to kick-off our organization’s new partnership with Smile Train," said Wurtzbach. "As Miss Universe, I look forward to lending my voice and a helping hand to continue to raise awareness for children born with cleft lip and palate in the developing world, including my home country, the Philippines."

For more information about Smile Train's global efforts and to make a donation, please visit smiletrain.org. Follow Smile Train on Twitter and Instagram @SmileTrain and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/SmileTrain.

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About Smile Train

Smile Train is an international children's charity with a sustainable approach to a single, solvable problem: cleft lip and palate. Millions of children in developing countries with unrepaired clefts live in shame, but more importantly, have difficulty eating, breathing and speaking. Cleft repair surgery is simple, and the transformation is immediate. Smile Train's sustainable model provides training and funding to empower local doctors in 85+ developing countries to provide 100%-free cleft repair surgery in their own communities. To learn more about how Smile Train's sustainable approach means donations have both an immediate and long-term impact, please visit smiletrain.org.

About Miss Universe Organization

The Miss Universe Organization (MUO) uses its global grassroots reach to empower women to be self-confident and strive to be their personal best. MUO believes that every woman should be "Confidently Beautiful." The MISS UNIVERSE®, MISS USA®, and MISS TEEN USA® pageants provide an international platform through dedicated partnerships with charities, sponsors, and brands around the world. During their reign, the titleholders are given the tools to personally and professionally enrich others by providing humanitarian efforts to affect positive change, all while developing their personal career goals. For more information, and to learn more about Miss Universe's official cause to raise awareness for HIV/AIDS education and prevention around the world, please visit: www.missuniverse.com.

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