



## A Journey to Remember

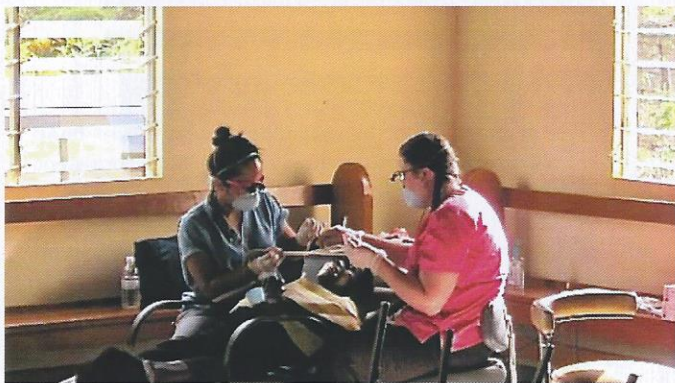
*CDS Jamaica Mission Trip 2014*

**JONELLE DOCTOR '16**

On March 8th -15th of 2014, Marquette dental students embarked on a mission trip to St. Elizabeth Parish in Treasure Beach, Jamaica. The trip was organized through the Christian Dental Society and lead by Drs. Jim Carney and Bill Griffin. Like some of the other volunteers, this was not my first mission trip. I participated in a dental mission trip to the Philippines in 2007. That life-changing experience solidified my dream to become a dentist. I was ecstatic to serve on a mission trip again, this time with fellow classmates at MUSoD.

Dentistry on a mission trip is not like dentistry within the school. There are no start checks, prep checks, and fill checks. On this trip, the doctors were always available whenever any student needed help. D3 and D4 students were essentially on their own, addressing the patient's chief complaint and providing either a cleaning, filling, or extraction. D2, D1, and pre-dental students mainly assisted the upperclassman, but got plenty of hands-on experience as well. I proudly extracted my first tooth in Jamaica, a nerve-wrecking and exhilarating experience!

Interacting with the Jamaican people was a life-changing opportunity in itself. In general, Jamaicans are extremely friendly and easy going. They were very patient, tolerant, and even the kids were brave through their first injections and extractions. Many Jamaicans were unfamiliar with the dentist, and to some, the only solution to tooth pain was an extraction. Dental students find extractions very exciting, but it was equally rewarding to relieve someone's dental pain by doing a simple filling. The most memorable patient I had needed a cleaning and I'm pretty sure it was the most extreme cleaning I will do in my entire life.



The patient had calculus that covered her teeth, and extended apically over her gingiva. A classmate and I spent TWO HOURS scaling and root planing, but the result was well worth it. The Jamaican woman was so grateful; we sincerely made a difference in her life.

Jamaica is truly a beautiful and unique place. Everyday, the hosts of our villas prepared us authentic Jamaican meals including jerk chicken, sandwiches with fresh crab meat, and festivals (fried dough) with guava jelly. Besides serving in the clinic,



our volunteer team went on various excursions including zip-lining at YS Falls, a safari cruise down the Black River and a trip to the "Pelican Bar" built on an ocean sand bar. We even got to go crab hunting in the pitch black ocean, because the crabs only like to come out at night.

Jamaica reminded me of why I chose to pursue dentistry. Often times, the stress of school makes us forget why we chose this career path. Our post-dental-school plans are so focused on paying off student debt that we forget to include serving those in need. Dentistry is not all about teeth - it's about people. Our profession is not only how we will make a living, but it is how we will serve society and impact people's lives, whether it be through a simple cleaning or complicated extraction. I left Jamaica with a renewed confidence that I chose the right profession. I feel extremely blessed to have shared this experience in Jamaica with my classmates, and I encourage everyone to participate in a mission trip if the opportunity arises.