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## Area Dental Missionary Lands Moments after Quake

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## Area Dental Missionary Lands Moments after Quake

### **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"A smile is a language that can transcend all borders. When Dr. Michele Bonnevie left Harrisburg Airport she expected her trip to Guatemala to be just like her two previous dental mission trips. Fifteen minutes prior to her plane landing at Guatemala City, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake rocked the western coast of the country."



Bill Vaughn  
(SJFC Class of 2006)

## **Area Dental Missionary Lands Moments after Quake**

CAMP HILL, Pennsylvania (November 20, 2012)-

A smile is a language that can transcend all borders. When Dr. Michele Bonnevie left Harrisburg Airport she expected her trip to Guatemala to be just like her two previous dental mission trips. Fifteen minutes prior to her plane landing at Guatemala City, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake rocked the western coast of the country.

Dr. Bonnevie, along with a group of four other dentists and assistants landed safely and were quickly notified about the quake. Information was slow to trickle in because the quake was located off the Western coast of the country. The group had to make sure they completed the hour and a half truck ride from the city to the mountains outside of Patzún as this trip could only take place during the day due to the risk of gangs along the road after night fall.

Setting up at a clinic that Dr. Bonnevie describes as “a room with a dated dental chair and four walls,” the group began the week long process of treating patients who only have access to dental care when mission groups come to the area. During this time the group worked long hours cleaning, filling, and extracting teeth to prevent further infection.

Dr. Bonnevie estimates the group saw over 240 patients during the trip. Dr. Bonnevie explains that, “Without this medical care patients would continue to be in pain until they ultimately develop an infection or lose their teeth. Losing teeth can ultimately lead to malnutrition due to an inability to eat.”

A graduate of the University at Buffalo Dental School, Dr. Bonnevie has a history of volunteer work both in and outside the realm of dentistry. Including her three trips to Guatemala, she has taken a similar trip to Tampico, Mexico in 2009. She also participated in disaster relief efforts in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina devastated the region in 2005. She says that work like this is “very fulfilling because I am able to do something so little for those who need so much more yet they appreciate the little that I do.”

Dr. Bonnevie recently began practicing at *Verber Family Dentistry* in Camp Hill. Bonnevie’s colleague Dr. Michael Verber believes mission work is important because, “experiences like Michele’s also resonate at home as the lessons learned from missionary work tend to shape the way we treat and care for our own communities. Whether it is helping local families struggling to get dental care or volunteering elsewhere in the community, *Verber Family Dentistry* believes strongly in giving back.”

### **Bill:**

**Graduation:** December 2006 Communications Major

**Current Job:** Wegmans Harrisburg, PA Seafood Team Leader

Upon graduation Bill was offered the meat team leader position at the Wegmans in Allentown PA. He lived and worked there for a year until the Wegmans in Mechanicsburg PA opened. He was asked to relocate and be the team leader of meat in the Mechanicsburg. He has been living in the Carlisle, PA area for the past five years. He took an opportunity to learn the seafood department about 3 years ago and has been the Seafood team leader ever since. He will reach his 12 years working with Wegmans in March.



**Michele:**

**Graduation:** May 2007 *Biology Major, Double Minor in Chemistry and Religious Studies*

Doctorate SUNY Buffalo School of Dental Medicine 2011

**Current Job:** Associate at Verber Family Dentistry

Upon graduating from St. John Fisher, I was accepted into the University Of Buffalo School Of Dental Medicine. I moved back to my hometown and completed my four years of schooling. After graduated I opted to continue on with a one year residency at Sheehan Memorial Hospital in Buffalo NY. Once I finished my year here, I was hired as an associate in a family practice in Camp Hill PA. I moved and started my job with Verber Family Dentistry in July. I spend most my time planning for my upcoming wedding to Bill Vaughn.



**Upcoming Wedding Info:**

Bill and Michele met freshman year at Fisher living one floor apart in Murphy. Over the next 8 years their friendship eventually blossomed into love despite the distance. Michele was finishing up her Doctorate of Dental Surgery in Buffalo as Bill was building his career at Wegman's in Pennsylvania. The two eventually settled in Harrisburg, PA in 2012. In June, 2012 Bill proposed to Michele and the couple is getting married on September 7th, 2013 in Michele's home town of Grand Island, NY.