

# Taking Flight: Fanshawe College's 2025 Hygiene Outreach Program to Grenada

05/23/2024 by Michael Carabash, BA, LLB, JD, MBA, CDPM



## Planting the Seed

For 5 days in August 2023, Fanshawe College dental hygiene professors Kelly Turner and Shelley Getty helped run a pilot sealant project for [Grenada's](#) children.

The “*Seal Grenada*” program was a big success: 14 dental volunteers (mostly Canadian) saw 592 patients at a primary school and placed 2,918 sealants, applied 504 fluoride treatments, performed 41 fillings and 23 extractions, and applied Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) to 277 teeth.

Kelly, Shelly, and the other dental volunteers were part of a larger team of dental professionals there to provide free treatments to locals over a 3-week period. Volunteers were hosted for free by **Sandals Grenada**, a 5-star All-Inclusive Luxury Resort (courtesy of the Sandals Foundation and the **Adam Stewart** family). Other partners for the project included: **Great Shape! Inc.** (a U.S. not-for-profit that helps run dental programs throughout the Caribbean), **Henry Schein Cares** (which generously donates sundries), **Dr. Julie Du Bois** (Grenada Dental Association), **Dr. Brian Holmes** (Spice Isle Smiles), Canada's dynamic philanthropic duo (dentist **Dr. Sanjukta Mohanta** and hygienist **Bev Woods**), and Grenada's Ministry of Health and Education.

Kelly and Shelly were so enthralled by what they experienced that they came back and got to work establishing an international hygiene outreach program for Fanshawe.



## Hatching a Plan

Kelly and Shelly worked on enhancing the hygiene curriculum at Fanshawe to ensure that participating students got credit while learning about travel safety, cultural sensitivity, and volunteerism as a global citizen.

In terms of getting Fanshawe on board, per Kelly: “We thankfully got approval from senior leadership. Health and safety had some requirements and we satisfied those. We also have a department promoting international field trips and a process in place for us to follow, including registering as a traveller with the Canadian government and ensuring all participants have travel medical insurance. Thankfully Grenada was in the ‘Green’ zone when it came to safety.”

“One neat story worth mentioning,” said Shelley, “is that our Senior VP of Academics, Gary Lima, came by to say hi during Fanshawe’s dental hygiene open house and I said ‘You gotta see this trip to Grenada!’ And he was watching a

20-slide presentation I had put up of our trip. Gary was very excited to learn about it and share it with the other senior leadership at Fanshawe. He was looking at the pictures and remarked about how the primary school we ran *Seal Grenada* from looked just like the one he attended as a kid in the Caribbean. It took him back 50 years. He said it made his day!”



## Cracking the Egg

Next up: Kelly and Shelley had to convince the dental hygiene students (and their parents) to participate in Grenada 2024.

“We were really excited coming back and sharing the pics we took,” said Shelley. “We did a PowerPoint presentation for the students. We shared stories. We talked about the need and challenges we saw in Grenada. And how much it touched our hearts to be there. We also talked about how we’d need to adapt our attire to the Caribbean heat and be mindful of our limited time allotted to treat patients.”

The students in all three years of dental hygiene and dental assisting were very excited at the opportunity to participate. Looking at the time of year of the dental mission and the skill level it was decided to offer the trip to second years. Students applied with a questionnaire about why they wanted to go and participated in an interview process. This type of humanitarian project is a first for the dental programs and the student participants are eager to represent their school. At the recent Open house in March 2024, prospective students and their parents were impressed with the enthusiasm second year students spoke about their preparations for their Grenada trip.

Then came the fundraising. Kelly and Shelly invited first and second year hygiene students to formalize a fundraising committee for the 2024 trip.

“The students learned new skills” says Shelley. “We’ve scheduled meetings. The students assigned themselves roles, including chair of the committee, project leads, treasurer, and marketing. The students conducted formalized meetings with agendas and minutes and documented everything! Kelly liaised with the Fanshawe Foundation to coordinate donations and offer tax receipts. This experience gave the students a different set of real-world skills and experiences that we didn’t anticipate. And they took it all very seriously.”

Kelly joked at how the students modernized the whole approach to fundraising: “What’s funny is that Shelly and I would have run a periodic bake sale, with limited marketing, and taking only cash. We’re old school! But the students run a regular bake sale, coincided it with special events and themes, and got a Square to take plastic payment. They’re doing Instagram and Go Fund me and working with the student union. They sell out all the time. They’re selling sweaters. They have a raffle for a toothbrush coming up. The parents are involved as well. It’s been amazing to see everyone take off with it!”

Kelly and Shelley also didn’t expect the high level of leadership and comradery to develop between the first and second year dental hygiene students. As Kelly recalls: “We started in September, but by December we had our fundraising committee together. Next year, first years will take over chair and co-chair. They’ve all taken off as leaders. During Dental Hygiene week in April the entire program has student planned events from a spinning wheel prize table to dodgeball and participation in other community outreach. The bond being created between the classes has spilled out to amazing participation outside the classroom that we haven’t seen in years.”

The students themselves are keen to have these types of experiences. Per Shelley: “Once they graduate, they want to be out in the community. So volunteering their time, skills, knowledge, and experience in Grenada for those in need is very important for them. It’s not just going to work in private practice and making a dollar.”

Amazingly, Fanshawe and the Canadian government have bursaries available to the students for these types of trips – currently in the amount of approximately \$2,000 per person. These bursaries significantly reduce the costs of participating (typically around \$2.5k-\$3k per person in total – depending on the cost of the flight).

## Taking Flight

Thanks to Kelly and Shelley’s tremendous efforts, there are now almost 15 dental hygiene students set to go down to Grenada this August to provide free hygiene services to the locals.

What Kelly and Shelley need now is financial support to make the program sustainable for future generations of Fanshawe hygiene students. And we need Canada’s other dental hygiene schools to follow suit. We want to look back at this moment and say we helped “Seal Grenada” to reduce caries and identify and address future oral health issues before they arose. That’ll make us soar, high and proud. Fitting because the Grenada Dove is Grenada’s national bird.



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## About the Author



Michael Carabash, BA, LLB, JD, MBA, CDPM is a founding partner of [DMC LLP](#), Canada's largest dental-only law firm that helps dentists sell and buy practices in Ontario. Michael leads DMC's annual Caribbean dental mission trips (Grenada, Jamaica, Turks & Caicos, Bahamas and Sint Maarten). Michael can be reached at [michael@dentistlawyers.ca](mailto:michael@dentistlawyers.ca) or 647.680.9530.

