



**Children's Surgery
International**

SUMMER 2026

Changing lives,

one child at a time.

BUILDING SURGICAL CAPACITY IN ETHIOPIA

This May, six CSI volunteers traveled to Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, for the third fellowship-focused surgical training campaign with our partners at Bahir Dar University and College of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The week was a masterclass in collaboration. ENT fellow Dr. Kassaw Ketemaw, anesthesia providers, nurses, and residents worked side by side with CSI volunteers in a hands-on learning environment. Even when the power failed, the work continued without hesitation. In total, 26 children received life-changing care, but the knowledge shared during these vital surgeries will continue shaping care for children into the future.

MARIE'S MOMENT ARRIVES

Surgery is often the pivotal milestone in a much longer journey of care. During screening day, the team evaluated 40 pediatric patients, including several malnourished infants not yet strong enough to undergo anesthesia. In these cases, support is essential before a child can reach the operating table. One such patient was baby Marie.



On a trip last year, the team met Marie when she was just three days old. At that time, she was far too young for the surgery required to repair her bilateral cleft lip. CSI and our partners provided her family with specialty bottles and formula, launching a months-long nutrition intervention. This May, a healthy and thriving Marie finally received her transformative surgery — a vital first step that will allow her to eat, speak, and grow alongside her peers.

MIKIYAS' JOURNEY

A moving moment of the trip was a reunion with Mikiyas. When the team first met him in early 2025, the 18-year-old had spent a decade struggling for every breath. A traumatic dog bite at age 7 had left his airway narrowed to the size of a pinhole. For Mikiyas, walking to school was impossible and a simple cold was a life-threatening event.

Sixteen months after his initial surgery, Mikiyas returned to us as a college student, now six inches taller and breathing with ease. He received follow-up surgery to address reformed scar tissue — a common step in complex

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Marie, before and after surgery

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BUILDING SURGICAL CAPACITY IN ETHIOPIA

CONTINUED FROM FRONT



Mikiyas (left)

airway reconstructions. His surgery was also a primary teaching case for the local team.

On the day of his surgery, CSI nurse volunteer Theresa Philbin shared, "today was a perfect example of CSI's focus on education.

The pictures show Dr. Kassaw learning how to do airway surgery, anesthesia learning how to assist, and an entire OR staff seeing something for the first time."

As we look toward the rest of the summer, we carry these stories with us. These successes are made possible by the expertise of our volunteers and the support of our CSI community.

Together, we aren't just providing surgery; we are building a future where the local healthcare system has the specialized skills and resources to help every child thrive.

The Impact at a Glance

40

children
screened for care



26

life-changing
surgeries performed



Wide-Ranging Care:

Procedures included cleft repairs, neck mass excisions, and specialized sclerotherapy.



Sustainability:

Focused training for CSI fellow Dr. Kassaw, residents, nurses, and support staff.



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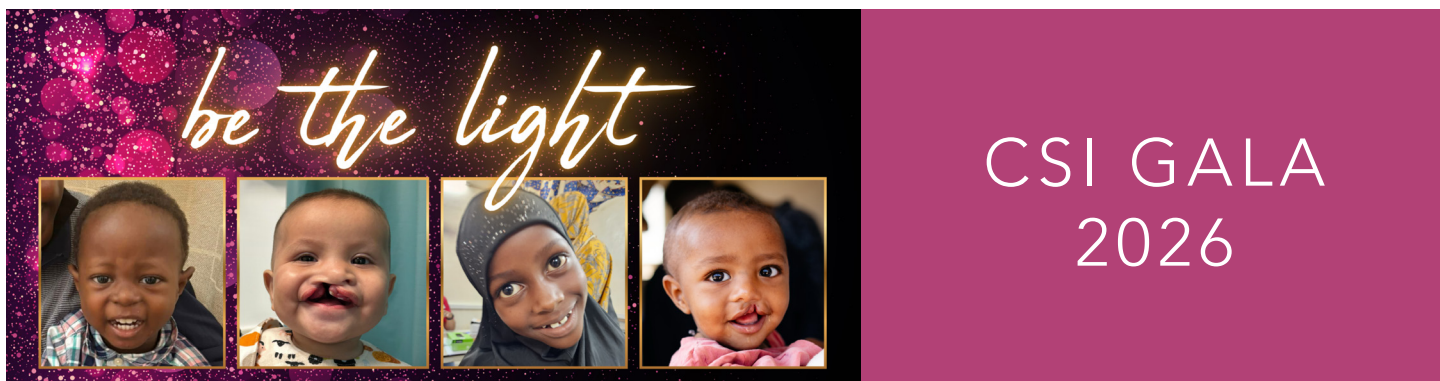
A Porsche eBike Sport, 2nd Generation could be yours! This premium eBike features 27.5" wheels, powerful e-assist technology, and a retail value of more than \$10,900.

Only 100 raffle tickets will be sold at \$100 each, giving you exceptional odds to win. The winning ticket will be drawn when all 100 tickets are sold or by Monday, September 14.

Contact CSI at (612) 746-4082 to arrange your raffle ticket purchase or mail a check to Children's Surgery International, 99 5th Ave NW, Suite 100, New Brighton, MN 55112.

Important details: Local delivery is provided at no charge. Winners outside the Twin Cities metro area may be responsible for shipping costs. Minnesota gambling laws require raffle tickets to be purchased using cash, check, or debit card; credit cards are not permitted.

Proceeds support CSI's mission to provide life-changing pediatric surgical care and professional education worldwide.



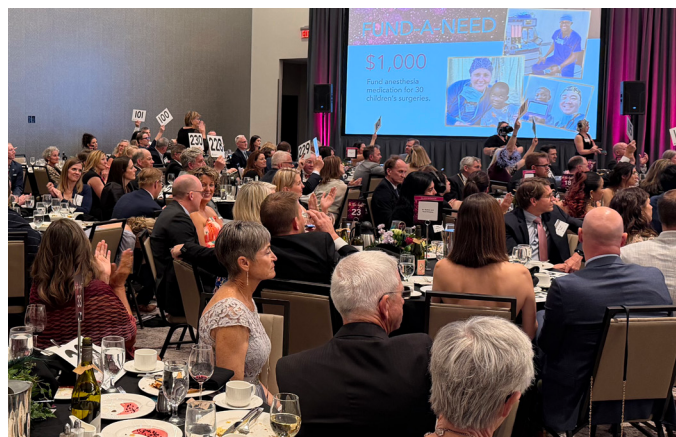
This year's Be the Light Gala raised a record-breaking \$560,000+ to support life-changing pediatric surgical care and strengthen the skills and capacity of medical professionals in our partner communities.

The evening was filled with extraordinary generosity and shared purpose as supporters gave boldly to advance our vision of a world where every child has access to essential surgical care.

However you showed up — attending, sponsoring, volunteering, bidding, donating, or spreading the word — you helped make this gala a success.

Thank you for being the light.

Mark your calendars for next year's Be the Light Gala on Saturday, May 1, 2027, at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel. We can't wait to gather again for another inspiring evening.



THANK YOU *to our sponsors*

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Your generosity
changes what's
possible.

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**Interested in helping make the
2027 CSI Gala a success?**

Join the planning committee! For more
information, email info@childrenssurgeryintl.org.



DR. JIM SIDMAN VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

CSI proudly presented the Dr. Jim Sidman Volunteer Service Award to Dan Sampson, MD, DDS, at the Be the Light Gala. For nearly 15 years, Dan has been a pioneer and organizational leader at CSI.

One of Dan's most significant contributions has been the expansion of services in Hermosillo, Mexico, to include alveolar bone grafting. This procedure rebuilds the upper jaw, creating a foundation for permanent teeth while also improving feeding, breathing, and speech. It represents a critical step in comprehensive cleft care and has meaningfully enhanced continuity of care for patients.

For Dan, this work has been grounded in a clear goal: ensuring children receive care that closely reflects the standard available in established cleft centers in the United States. His commitment to clinical excellence and equity of experience has defined his years of service with CSI. Dan has invested deeply in building local capacity through longstanding partnerships with Hermosillo orthodontists, mentoring colleagues and fostering the collaborative, multidisciplinary approach that is essential to successful cleft care.



It is in recognition of this impact that CSI presented the Dr. Jim Sidman Volunteer Service Award to Dan.

Dr. Jim Sidman was a pioneer in pediatric cleft care and a founding member of Children's Surgery International whose work helped shape modern cleft techniques and advance sustainable global surgical care. Named in his honor, this award recognizes individuals whose work reflects the same commitment to clinical excellence, mentorship, and lasting global impact that defined Jim's legacy.

CSI thanks Dan for his outstanding leadership and commitment to advancing care for children.



Keep your coffee freshly stocked while supporting life-changing pediatric surgical care worldwide. CSI has partnered with Stone Creek Coffee, a B Corp–certified roaster, for a coffee fundraiser that ships direct to your door.

20% of proceeds from almost everything you purchase, including our private label coffee, will benefit CSI.

To shop, scan the QR code or visit: bit.ly/CSICoffee2026

IMPORTANT: You must enter code **CSI2026** within the discount code field at checkout to ensure your purchase is counted. This fundraiser runs through December 31, 2026, so there's plenty of time to order again and again.

ORDER TODAY



ACADEMIC DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

10 Years of Collaboration in Ethiopia and Expanding Academic Horizons

SIVA CHINNADURAI, MD, MPH, MBA

Ten years ago, CSI and Bahir Dar University partnered to expand access to specialized pediatric surgical care in Ethiopia by investing in people, training, and sustainable systems.

What began as a partnership has grown into a true training ecosystem. Over the past decade, this collaboration has weathered epidemics, a global pandemic, political instability, and countless logistical challenges. Yet the work has continued to advance because it has always been built on trust, consistency, and shared purpose.

One of the clearest examples of what long-term partnership can make possible is our first-of-its-kind fellowship and our fellow, Dr. Kassaw Ketemaw.

Ten years ago, during CSI's first trip to Bahir Dar, Dr. Kassaw was a medical student sitting quietly in the back of a crowded room. He watched his first cleft lip surgery that day. What he saw changed the direction of his life. Inspired by that experience, he chose to pursue pediatric otolaryngology and facial plastic surgery.



Today, Dr. Kassaw is no longer watching from the back of the room. Since starting the fellowship in 2024, he has performed more than 200 independent cleft surgeries. As he enters the final year of CSI's Pediatric Otolaryngology and Facial Plastic Surgery Fellowship, he is also teaching the next generation of surgeons and helping select the next fellow to strengthen the systems that will sustain this work into the future.

During CSI's February fellowship-focused surgical training campaign in Bahir Dar, I had the privilege of walking alongside Dr. Kassaw as he reached another major milestone in his training: learning complete ear reconstruction.

In Ethiopia, as in many parts of the world, children and adults with congenital head and neck differences or traumatic injuries often face profound stigma. The loss or

absence of an ear can affect far more than appearance. It can influence how a person is seen in their community, how they participate in school or work, and how they move through daily life. The ability to make a new ear can help break down social barriers that once seemed insurmountable.

During this campaign, two adult patients underwent total ear reconstruction, creating a landmark teaching opportunity for Dr. Kassaw, the fellowship program, and the local surgical team. For me, it was a powerful reminder of why CSI's model matters. These are not isolated surgical trips. They represent the next step forward in surgical capacity and an opportunity to double down on our investment in people, sustainable systems, and broadening horizons.

This year, we have also become increasingly deliberate about building academic partnerships across the region and the continent. We are working with other African surgical and educational partners to share ideas, exchange lessons, and strengthen local leadership. We have also presented CSI's educational work at national meetings,

What began as a partnership has grown into a true training ecosystem.

including an oral presentation at the American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology meeting on creating pathways for formal global surgery education programs and a poster presentation at the American Cleft Palate Association highlighting our nursing education journey in Mexico.

We continue to engage local academic leaders in Liberia and The Gambia as we explore how to thoughtfully and sustainably expand CSI's impact in those areas. We know that with local leadership, shared ownership, and education at the center, we can build a better future for the communities we serve.

When I reflect on the past 10 years in Ethiopia, I think about promises kept. I think about colleagues who have become lifelong friends. I think about students becoming teachers.

Ten years is not the finish line. It is proof that the CSI model works, and because of the foundation we have built together, I believe the next decade will be even stronger.



LOOKING AHEAD

Liberia

ANGELA OLSON, RN

CSI is excited to return to Liberia in January for our fifteenth campaign. Again this year, we are planning for an expanded two-weeks of collaboration. The team will include urology surgeons, general surgeons and an ENT surgeon to help train the local staff. In recent years, CSI has had the privilege of having several Liberian nurses volunteer with us in Ethiopia, where they have helped train and mentor their Liberian counterparts. It's been rewarding to see our scope expand.

Volunteers will again provide community outreach, with plans to distribute deworming medication to thousands of children and adults as well as deliver donated school supplies, soccer balls, and essential daily living items to area schools, orphanages, and homes for the elderly.

Can you help with these outreach efforts? If you are shopping for school supplies this summer and have the means to add a few extra items to your cart, the Liberian children would be so appreciative of the gift. Donations may be dropped off or shipped directly to the CSI office in New Brighton by August 1.

Thank you for helping make our trip to Liberia as impactful as possible.



Help
with our
community
outreach in
Liberia

Shop our
wish list

Donations for Liberia may be dropped off or shipped directly to the CSI office in New Brighton by August 1.



The Gambia

KAREN RESCH, MD

We are preparing for our third annual trip to The Gambia this November, where we will once again provide educational support as well as general and urologic surgical care at Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. Drs. Nathan Kreykes and Catherine Robey will serve as the respective CSI volunteer surgeons.

We are grateful to continue this work alongside our Minnesota-based partner, Impact Health The Gambia (IHTG). IHTG's commitment to strengthening local healthcare systems within The Gambia complements CSI's mission by helping foster sustainable partnerships, support healthcare providers, and expand access to quality medical care.

Monthly conference calls with our partners are well underway. The resident surgeons are identifying cases they would like educational support on, and we are also working with the head nurse to build a collaborative approach to nursing education and postoperative care.

In the future, we hope to expand to three surgeons at this site, allowing us to care for even more children.

Your generosity makes this work possible. Because of your support, we can continue strengthening our partnerships with our colleagues in the Smiling Coast of Africa.



Mexico

CSI volunteers are hard at work preparing to return to Hermosillo, Mexico this October. The trip marks 22 years of collaboration with our partners at St. Andrews Children's Clinic and Hospital CIMA and Voluntariados. Twenty two years of working together to deliver world class cleft care to children in need. The schedule is filling quickly, with both new and returning patients seeking care.

It is with sadness that we share that Coca Romero, the founder of St. Andrew's Children's Clinic, passed away in June. Coca devoted her life to improving the lives of the children and families who were part of the cleft program, and thanks to her vision, countless lives have been transformed and will continue to be in the future. We are honored to have known her and worked alongside her, and she will be deeply missed.



BOARD UPDATES

Thank you Dr. Siva Chinnadurai and Zinda Schaefer

In June, Siva Chinnadurai, MD, MPH, MBA, and Zinda Schaefer rotated off the Board of Directors. We thank them for their leadership and service in support of CSI's mission.

Siva has been a part of CSI leadership since 2017 and has traveled with teams to Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Vietnam. Siva played a pivotal role in the development of CSI's Pediatric Otolaryngology and Facial Plastic Surgery Fellowship in Ethiopia. Established in partnership with Bahir Dar University, the accredited fellowship is only the second program of its kind in all of Sub-Saharan Africa and is helping expand access to specialized pediatric surgical care for children across the region. Siva will continue to serve as CSI's Academic Director and on various organizational committees to provide strategic vision and leadership for our work.

Zinda joined the Board in 2018 and has traveled with teams to Mexico and Tanzania. A passionate advocate for children's health, she has generously shared her time and expertise in support of CSI's mission. Through her leadership on the Development Committee, Zinda has helped secure essential new corporate partnerships and has grown our planned giving programs. She also has helped position CSI to support growth now and well into the future. Zinda will continue to strengthen our engagement with key donors and volunteers through her service on the Development Committee.



Dr. Siva Chinnadurai



Zinda Schaefer

Thank you, Siva and Zinda, for sharing the gifts of your time and talent to help us change lives and strengthen communities.



Dr. Brianne Roby

Welcome Dr. Brianne Roby and Theresa Philbin

Brianne Roby, MD, is the Director of the ENT and Plastic Surgery Fellowship at Children's of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota. She is also the Director of the Cleft Lip and Palate Program at Children's Minnesota. Brianne previously served on the CSI board from 2017 to 2025. She is a member of the CSI Medical and Mission Committee and spearheads CSI's annual trip to Mexico. She has traveled with CSI to Liberia, Mexico, and Vietnam.

Theresa Philbin, RN, has been volunteering with CSI since 2017, traveling to Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. She has served as the clinical lead in Ethiopia since 2019, supporting volunteer teams and coordinating patient care with our Ethiopian colleagues. Theresa brings invaluable frontline experience, a deep understanding of

surgical care delivery, and a longtime volunteer's perspective to the organization's leadership. Her commitment to service and passion for engaging others in our work will be essential as we continue to improve access to specialized pediatric surgical care worldwide.



Theresa Philbin

UPCOMING TRIPS

2026

Ethiopia:

August 1-9*
October 15-25
November 6-14*
December 4-12*

Mexico:

October 3-8

The Gambia:

November 12-21

2027

Liberia:

January 21 – February 7

Ethiopia:

February 25 – March 7

** Small, targeted Pediatric ENT and Facial Plastic Surgery Fellowship training trip*

