



# A Man on a Mission

Robbie Schureman completes his 100th Missions of Mercy event

**Several times each** year, in the dark, pre-dawn hours of the day, Henry Schein Dental sales consultant Robbie Schureman can be found, hours away from home, helping set up a dental clinic to treat patients in need. The next couple of days are spent loading or unloading trucks, comforting nervous patients, holding babies while their parent receives treatment and more.

It's no hardship, he says. Short of spending time with his family and servicing his dental customers, volunteering for Missions of Mercy (MOM) – a program of the Virginia Dental Association Foundation launched in 2000 in Virginia by Dr. Terry Dickinson to help the underserved, underinsured or uninsured population – is the most fulfilling way Schureman knows to fill his time. “For the last 17 years, I have been truly blessed to be able to live my dream of giving back,” he says.

Today, 26 states have adopted the Missions of Mercy model, in part thanks to America's Dentists Care Foundation, a non-profit organization that coordinates and launches new Missions of Mercy programs. In Virginia, where Schureman lives and volunteers, the Virginia Dental Association Foundation (VDAF) coordinates the MOM program, providing and maintaining dental equipment – much of which is donated or purchased with grants from corporations, foundations and the government.

“The total operational cost of MOM is \$300,000,” says Schureman, noting that in addition to fronting equipment costs, organizers must coordinate and feed the many volunteers, including volunteer dental students from the VCU School of Dentistry, as well as coordinate logistics and raise funds to continue the program. “Over the past 17 years in Virginia alone, MOM has provided nearly \$41 million in free dental services to 62,000 patients across 90 project sites,” he says. “More than 25,000 volunteers have worked together to make this happen.

“I participate in about five projects each year,” he continues. “I sometimes need to be on site as early as 4:30 a.m., and stay until evening.” The clinics are open for a day or day-and-a-half, so volunteers end up contributing as much as 2 ½ days of their time, not including their

travel time, which can take as long as five or six hours to and from the site. But, the service they provide is clearly valued. Patients have been known to come from as far as Florida to receive much-needed treatment. “They sometimes come in a week early and sleep in tents or cars [to increase their chances of receiving treatment],” he adds. “The saddest part is not being able to serve everyone. We run out of time and must turn people away.”

### A second family

Schureman learned about Missions of Mercy soon after it began. “At the time, I was managing the dental store at Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU) School of Dentistry,” he explains. He joined Henry Schein in 2007, when the company assumed the contract for dental materials sold at the store, and in 2010, he moved into a sales position. On one hand, he misses working with the dental students who patronized his old store. “I really got to know them during

that time and miss helping them through school,” he says. That said, he still encounters many of the students who have gone into dental practice. “It’s a great feeling to have them as customers, or to see them involved in Missions of Mercy,” he says. “One student is now the director of clinics for MOM.

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“The MOM team is like a [second] family to me,” he continues. “And, we have great partnerships with the Virginia Dental Association, the Virginia Dental Association Foundation and the VCU School of Dentistry. Our VCU student volunteer coordinators are rock stars, and I love seeing them at every project.”

Schureman also values the support he receives from Henry Schein Dental and his team members – including his regional manager, Robert Anderson; his zone manager, Jeff Chatham; and vice president of sales for Eastern Henry Schein Dental, Jake Meadows – who make it possible for him to devote time to MOM projects.





He's especially grateful to work with inside sales rep Laura Cooper in New York. "I could not do it without Laura's help," he says. "She absolutely takes care of my clients while I'm out working my dream!

"Henry Schein is truly committed to helping health happen, enabling my team members from across the country to volunteer at these clinics," he continues. "I am celebrating my 20th anniversary with Henry Schein this January, and truly cannot say enough about this company and the support they provide worldwide."

**100 missions**

Having completed his 100th mission this summer, Schureman has played a role in many success stories. "I have

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met a lot of patients [over the years], with various comprehensive oral health needs," he says. "I would say that the majority of patients are suffering because they are uninsured or underinsured and have nowhere to go but MOM clinics. We help [relieve them] of their pain and teach them the importance of better hygiene practices for their improved future health. At the MOM program, we believe not only in alleviating pain for those suffering right now, but also in working to create sustainable solutions to the far-reaching, unmet need for dental healthcare in Virginia."

Perhaps one story that stands out is that of a young woman whose life was changed by a new set of dentures. "We have a great denture team

## Henry Schein Cares

Henry Schein Cares stands on four pillars: engaging Team Schein Members to reach their potential; ensuring accountability by extending ethical business practices to all levels within Henry Schein; promoting environmental sustainability; and expanding access to healthcare for underserved and at-risk communities around the world. Healthcare activities supported by Henry Schein Cares focus on three main areas: advancing wellness, building capacity in the delivery of healthcare services and assisting in emergency preparedness and relief.

Firmly rooted in a deep commitment to social responsibility and the concept of enlightened self-interest championed by Benjamin Franklin, the philosophy behind Henry Schein Cares is a vision of “doing well by doing good.” Through the work of Henry Schein Cares to enhance access to care for those in need, the company believes that it is furthering its long-term success. “Helping Health Happen Blog” is a platform for healthcare professionals to share their volunteer experiences delivering assistance to those in need globally. To read more about how Henry Schein Cares is making a difference, visit the blog: [www.helpinghealthhappen.org](http://www.helpinghealthhappen.org).

In addition, The Henry Schein Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) organization, helps health happen by expanding access to care for at-risk and underserved populations globally through the support of not-for-profit organizations, institutions and communities dedicated to increasing the delivery of health education and care.

“[Henry Schein Dental sales consultant] Robbie Schureman’s commitment to the Mission of Mercy program is a true testament to the Team Schein culture and spirit of Henry Schein Cares,” said Steve Kess, Vice President, Global Professional Relations, Henry Schein and co-founder, Henry Schein Cares. “We are proud to support him in his endeavors to enhance access to care and improve the lives of those most in need.”

that uses a product from the Benchmark Denture Company, which delivers a full set of dentures in about an hour,” says Schureman. “A couple of years ago, a young lady came to the project. [She was embarrassed that she had no teeth], and would always cover her mouth when she spoke. After the team delivered her dentures, I watched her break down and cry when she realized she could fully smile for the first time in years.” She wasn’t the only one crying, he adds. “The doctor and the denture team were also crying! They kept repeating, ‘That is why we are here.’”

The following year, the woman returned to MOM to thank the Benchmark team for all it did, Schureman recalls. She also let them know that because she felt comfortable smiling, she was able to get a job and dental insurance. In fact, she wanted to volunteer at MOM to help others in need. “She wanted to change someone else’s life like we had changed hers,” he says. This is just one story, he points out. “This sort of thing happens all of the time. These doctors and volunteers – even the ones who simply hold a patient’s hand – do so much.”

“The energy is very high at MOM, as every volunteer is excited to help change someone’s life,” says Schureman. “For example, in Wise, Va. – our largest event serving over 1,200 patients – we work outside, under big tents at the County Fairgrounds. It always seems to rain or be very hot. Regardless, all of the volunteers have a big smile on their face because they are doing what they love to do – helping to change a life.” The Wise, Va., MOM project is a particularly meaningful event for Schureman, as his family joins him there each year and also volunteers.

Comforting patients and helping unload supplies account for some of what Schureman does for MOM, but not everything. Once a year, he cooks a thank-you meal for about 200 volunteers. Recently, he drove six hours to Grundy, Va., where he helped set up the MOM event, and then busied himself shopping for food and ingredients to prepare a couple of different gourmet chili dishes. “We want to give our volunteers something other than the [typical] hotdogs and hamburgers,” he says. In addition, every year, he and his family host a fundraiser dinner for MOM volunteers and friends.

After 17 years and 100 missions, Schureman is as energized about his next MOM event as he was at the start. After all, when every volunteer experience leads to so many successful outcomes for the recipients, “why would I want to stop?” ■