

LAKE MARY

Lake Mary • Heathrow • Sanford • Longwood

Life™

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A photograph of four people standing in a dental office. From left to right: a man in a striped shirt and black pants, a woman in a blue patterned top and black skirt, a woman in a beige dress with a wide belt, and a man in a white polo shirt and blue jeans. They are all smiling. In the background, there is a dental chair and a wall-mounted light.

Fighting *Tooth* and Nail

How Leadership Seminole beat the odds
to open Harvest Time International's
free dental clinic

SOCIALIZING WITH A PURPOSE

Heathrow Women's Club celebrates 25 years.

FIGHTING *Tooth* AND NAIL

**HARVEST
TIME** *International*
CARING BY SHARING

Dental Care Center

Yes, We're
OPEN

by Chip Colandreo

*Through obstacles and adversity, Leadership Seminole Class 21
leaves an unprecedented legacy for those in need.*

A mobile dental clinic in the back of an old RV...

What could go wrong?

Standing in the operatory of the stunning new, 1,100 square-foot Harvest Time International Dental Care Center in Sanford, it's hard to imagine this dream of a free dental resource for Seminole County's disadvantaged residents began life as a slightly more blurry vision shared among the area's best and brightest.

"Each year's Leadership Seminole class chooses a major community project to spearhead," explains Amy Pennock (though she resists the title, Amy was elevated by

her colleagues to serve as the unofficial president of 2012's Leadership Seminole Class 21). "Early in the Leadership Seminole experience, we divide into groups, and each group chooses a project to pitch."

In Amy's group was André Smolinsky, chief operating officer of Harvest Time, the major local and international relief organization that provides free or low-cost food, clothing, and medical care to area families living in or near poverty. A native of Germany, André was drawn to Leadership Seminole to learn the inner workings of county government and the local business community. Little did André know, he was about to get a major crash course in both.

"We were trying to think of worthwhile projects, and my classmates started asking what Harvest Time might need," André recalls. "I never imagined we would be the benefactors of the class project, but I mentioned our plans to eventually open a free dental clinic. It's a goal we've had at Harvest Time for a while, but we knew it was at least three-to-five years down the road."

Until Class 21 came along, those in Seminole County without dental insurance or the means to pay for care out-of-pocket had only one dental option -- the County Health Department, where dental care is, by necessity and



Pastor John Murphy and André Smolinsky cut the ribbon at the dedication ceremony for the Harvest Time International Dental Care Center.

Legacy of LEADERSHIP

The Class 21 Project

A Leadership Seminole Initiative



design, a last resort for those in dire need. Otherwise there was no place in Seminole for families to get the preventive care, regular checkups, and education that would lead to a lifetime of dental health. To André's pleasant surprise, the class embraced Harvest Time's mission to fill this unfortunate gap in the county's overall health system. That's when the real adventure began.

It started innocently and quixotically enough as the class brainstormed. A Harvest Time benefactor had pledged to donate his pre-owned motor home to the organization. Wouldn't it be great, Class 21 thought, if some used dental equipment could be installed in the repurposed RV and a mobile dental clinic could make its way through Seminole County leaving good dental health in its tracks? The class voted, and a very doable fundraising budget of \$50,000 was approved.

"Well, plan A didn't last long," Amy says with a laugh. "We quickly realized the weight of the necessary equipment would exceed the limits of the RV's chassis, so we went back to the drawing board. If only that had been our lone setback."

Plan B was much more ambitious, but potentially much more impactful. Class 21 negotiated with Seminole County Public Schools to secure a leftover portable classroom that was sitting unused on SCPS property. You couldn't drive it around, and outfitting the portable would cost more money, but the larger space meant more citizens could be served. Class 21 rose to the bigger challenge, and the fundraising apparatus went into full swing as class members engaged the community to step up for the cause. A groundbreaking adjacent to Harvest Time headquarters was planned, and engraved fundraising bricks were even sold to line the walking path to the portable's welcoming door.

Then, the red tape began to unravel.



Community Reception Begins New Leadership Seminole Tradition

The Harvest Time Dental Care Center project was unique because of the diverse community partners and Leadership Seminole alumni who joined Class 21 to make the clinic a reality. To thank everyone for their teamwork and support, Class 21 hosted a community reception at Harvest Time shortly before the clinic officially opened to the public.

During the event, unofficial Class 21 President Amy Pennock led tours of the Care Center for donors and partners who had yet to see it. Meanwhile, everyone enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and drinks as they reflected on the collective achievement.

It's expected that most future Leadership Seminole class projects will involve similar community collaboration, so the wrap-up reception is sure to become a new Leadership Seminole tradition.

"Each Leadership class leaves behind a Legacy of Leadership."

Through Leadership's Legacy of Leadership initiative, classes have raised \$694,000 and donated 10,150 volunteer hours to local non-profits."

— Wayne Weinberg,
president of Leadership Seminole, Inc.



Class 21 raised funds to stock the clinic with toothbrushes and supplies, but more are needed to keep the Care Center fully equipped long term.

"Oh my goodness, we never imagined how much trouble one portable could cause," says André.

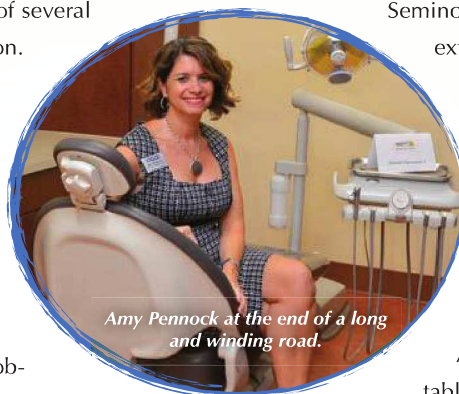
From electricity to the portable's exterior facade, the zoning restrictions and permitting requirements quickly spiraled the plan's costs out of control. Even moving the portable a few miles down the road would have required the temporary relocation of several power lines, a difficult and expensive proposition.

Plans B, C, D, and E were following their predecessor off the cliff, but then André had an idea, and everything finally started falling into place.

"We had some little-used space inside the main Harvest Time building that could be renovated to house the clinic," André explains. "That solved all our permitting and zoning problems, but the cost jumped significantly."

Class 21's humble \$50,000 project was now a quarter-million-dollar odyssey, one that an already weary Leadership Seminole Class would have to fund.

"It was so inspiring to see everyone band together and overcome these obstacles," says Mindy Black, the Class 21 member who singlehandedly raised the most money – a cool 50 grand. "That's what these classes and this community is all about."



Amy Pennock at the end of a long and winding road.

We see a need, and we're going to meet it, whatever it takes."

It also took a bit of providence and the help of Leadership Seminole alumni. JR Ball, a member of the inaugural Leadership Seminole Class from more than 20 years ago heard about the project and thought he could help. JR knew Mark Bessette, a

Seminole County-based general contractor with extensive dental office experience. Mark and Amy were introduced, and the magic began to happen. Before Mark's firm was done, more than \$150,000 in labor and supplies had been donated to the project. The crew even found use for the fundraising bricks. They now adorn a wall in the Dental Care Center's new waiting area.

A \$95,000 grant from the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation put the project over the top, and the dream was a reality. In fact, from used equipment in an old RV, the combined efforts of the contractors, the Edyth Bush Foundation, and the intrepid Class 21 members created a warm, inviting space filled with brand-new dental gear and the promise of quality dental care for those who've never experienced it before.

"This entire adventure is a tribute to our incredible community," says Amy. "We didn't know what we were in for when we began this quest, but the end result is more incredible than we could have ever imagined."

Calling All Dentists and Hygienists

The Dental Care Center needs your expertise and will arrange its staff and operating hours to fit your busy schedule. To volunteer, contact the clinic today.



SO, WHAT NOW?

The physical space is a fundraising miracle come to life, but what the Harvest Time Dental Care Center needs now is more dentists and hygienists. The clinic is up and running, but it can only be open to serve those in need as often as volunteer dentists and dental technicians can be there to staff it. Volunteers have already come forward to keep the center open several days a month, but the goal is a full 30 days a month of open service. A full-time dental assistant is on staff at the Harvest Time Dental Care Center (another fundraising triumph) and dentists and hygienists who volunteer their time there are protected by Florida law against liability claims on their home practices.

Monetary donations and supplies are also needed to keep the clinic up and running through the months and years ahead. To find out what the clinic needs and what you can do to help, visit www.HTIDental.org.

225 N Kennel Rd Sanford, FL 32771
ami@harvesttime.org • 407.878.5495 • www.htidental.org