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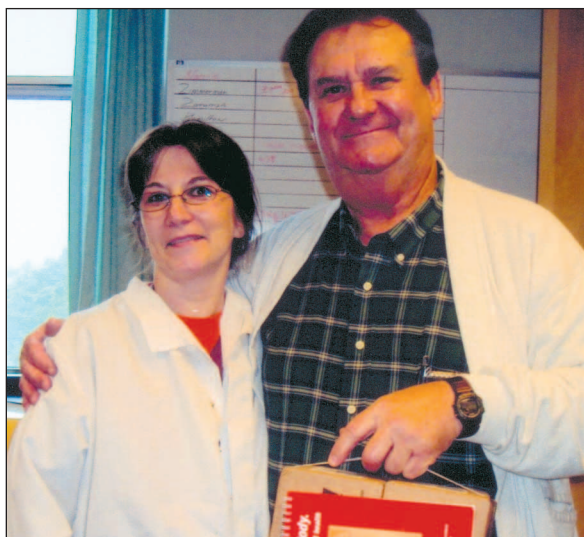
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Togus dental assistant makes a difference halfway around the world in the other China

by Gary Kennedy

Cleft lip is a genetic deformity that is seen in every country in the world. However, it is a very common occurrence in most of the Asian countries. This deformity in most countries would not be considered life threatening but such is not the case in countries with population limitations.



Candy Kunn, left, participated in the Alliance for Smiles program in the Republic of China to help with cleft lip problems. Pictured with Candy is Gary Kennedy, a representative of the Rotary Club of Hallowell, one of the sponsoring groups.

Contributed photo

China is a country that has decided to dictate the growth of its population. The rule in China is now, one child per family. The government of China rules its people with an iron hand. If you don't obey, the consequences may cost you your life.

In China, the only life insurance available is your children. So, the majority of Chinese people desire an intelligent male child without any sort of deformity. Because of Chinese culture this child will be educated to the best possible outcome. The child in turn will protect and support his or her parents in their elder years. In some cases a female child will be able to pull this off but usually that will happen only through a successful marriage arrangement. In China women are still very much in subjection to the men.

As you can see, we already have a serious conflict here cloaked in fear and necessity. What do we do if the birth of this one child is a child with a deformity, such as cleft lip? There are recorded cases of these unwanted births being disposed of in landfills, garbage cans or just left on the stairs of another. In most cases this tears at the heart strings of the family but the greater good of the family suggests the termination of this less than perfect life. At the very least the child must be removed from the family unit.

Well, today there is hope for these poor unfortunate children. Organizations such as Alliance for Smiles, in conjunction with groups such as Rotary International, have stepped up to help save these poor innocent children. Most of us have heard of these organizations but really haven't heard the story.

Alliance for Smiles is made up of medical volun-

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80,000 lbs.
vs.
100,000 lbs.

by Roland D. Hallee

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Transportation notified the state of Maine that it was in violation of federal vehicle weight requirements. As a result, trucks traveling north of Augusta on I-95 were forced off the Interstate onto smaller, secondary rural roads (such as Lakeview Drive, in China) that pass through downtown and residential areas, creating safety concerns and road damage. Getting these trucks off these streets and rural roads, and back on the highways, has become a hot item amongst residents of these towns.

Presently, Interstate 95 weight requirements of trucks traveling north of Augusta are not to exceed 80,000 pounds over five axles. This highway, when originally designed, was built for military freight movements to Loring Air Force Base, in Limestone, at weights much heavier than 100,000 pounds. Raising the truck weight limit to 100,000 pounds over six axles would keep heavy trucks on the interstates, which are designed to carry more weight than the rural state roads. This would also help avoid the deterioration of Maine's state roads, which are badly in need of repair.

According to the Maine Motor Transport Association, the higher weight limit would reduce highway miles, fuel costs for trucking operators, and the travel times necessary to deliver freight through Maine.

Trucks weighing up to 100,000 pounds are permitted on interstate highways in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New York, as well as the Canadian provinces of Québec and New Brunswick. The disparity for Maine has put the state at an economic disadvantage, according to information from the office of Maine Senator Susan Collins.

In December 2009, Sen. Collins, a member of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, was successful in

securing a provision in the fiscal year 2010 transportation appropriations bill that established a one-year pilot project to exempt Maine's federal highways from the 80,000-pound federal truck weight limit.

Due to the efforts of Collins and the rest of the Maine delegation, Senator Olympia Snowe, Rep. Mike Michaud and Rep. Chellie Pingree, the truck weight limit on Interstate 95 from Augusta to Houlton has been temporarily increased to 100,000 pounds. Prior to the enactment of the bill, the weight limit on the sections of I-95 from Augusta to Houlton was 80,000 pounds, while the southern section of Maine's major federal highway was 100,000 pounds.

Since the imposition of the temporary lift on the limits, area residents along U.S. Route 3, state Rte. 202 through South China and China, and Rte. 9/137/202 to Albion and Rte. 9/202 to Unity, have noticed a dramatic decrease in tractor-trailer truck activity over the roads, and, according to those residents, an improved quality of life.

Without additional authorizing federal legislation, the weight limit on the portion of I-95 north of Augusta will revert to 80,000 pounds on December 26.

The current temporary legislation requires the U. S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and the Maine Department of Transportation to study the impact of the one-year pilot on safety, road durability, bridge safety, commerce and energy use. To help ensure that the data is as comprehensible as possible, Sen. Collins has requested a one-year extension of the project in the 2011 transportation appropriations bill. The entire Maine congressional delegation is continuing to work with colleagues in both the Senate and House to make the provision permanent.

Sen. Collins' pilot program received strong support from public safety and law enforcement agencies and business groups, including the Maine Department of Public Safety, the Maine State Police, the Maine Troopers Association, and the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce.

Next week: Data compiled by the Maine Motor Transport Association concerning safety, infrastructure, environment and economics of the proposed permanent change to the truck weight limits on I-95 north of Augusta.

“State and federal motor carrier statistics that have been gathered over the years tell us that every time you can get a large truck off a small rural road and onto a divided, limited access highway, the chance to avoid accidents and prevent death greatly increases.”

Anne H. Jordan
Commissioner of Public Safety
State of Maine