

Announcing the 2026 Unspoken Smiles Fellows

Third Cohort Expands Regional Impact as Future Oral Health Leaders from Four Countries Join Unspoken Smiles' Growing Fellowship Network

SAN JOSÉ, SAN JOSÉ PROVINCE, COSTA RICA, July 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a time when oral diseases remain among the most common yet preventable health conditions in the world, [Unspoken Smiles](#) announced the 2026 Class of the Unspoken Smiles Fellowship, welcoming 30 fellows between the ages of 17 and 38 from Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Nicaragua.

Now entering its third cohort, the Fellowship has emerged as one of the most innovative oral health leadership programs in Latin America—combining public health, clinical education, community service, mentorship, international exposure, and workforce development into a single experience designed to prepare the next generation of oral health leaders.

Since its inception, fellows have helped screen more than 1,000 schoolchildren across eight public schools in San José Central, supporting prevention-focused programs aimed at reducing childhood tooth decay and advancing Unspoken Smiles' flagship Zero Cavity Initiative.

The Fellowship's impact extends far beyond community screenings.

Over the past year, alumni fellows participated in their first international outreach mission to the San Blas Islands of Panama in collaboration with FLO International, delivering oral health education and services to Indigenous communities. The program also hosted its first official Fellowship Welcome Reception, sponsored by the Western Union Foundation and the Watson Institute, bringing together fellows, alumni, faculty members, and partners to celebrate a



Fellowship Costa Rica 2026

growing movement for oral health equity throughout the region.

"Oral diseases affect billions of people worldwide, yet they remain largely preventable," said Jean Paul Laurent, Founder and President of Unspoken Smiles. "Our Fellowship is proving that when young people are given the right opportunities, mentorship, and support, they can become powerful agents of change. We are not simply training future dental professionals—we are developing future leaders in public health, social impact, and community service."

The 2026 Fellowship class includes:

Naomi Solano, Natalia Rojas, Daniela Gómez, Katalina Valerio, Adriana González Zúñiga, Scarlett Gätjens, Melany Chaves, Osirys Rivas, Ashly Ariana Mondalgo, Anneth Garzón, Diana Ugalde, Jocselyn Aguilar, Linsey Mendoza, Raiza Guerra, Ximena Fallas, Sebastian Monge, Cristina Bonilla, Samantha Castro, Alondra Chavarría, María Paula Salas, Luciana Haug, Yubelky Espinoza, Sophia Jiménez, Yuliana Vega, Ana Isabel Escalona, Mary Paz Barrientos, Abigail Rojas, Raquel Rojas, Brittanie López, and Mónica Trejos.

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The future of oral health will not be built in clinics alone—it will be built by young leaders who choose prevention over complacency and service over silence.”

Jean Paul Laurent, Founder & President, Unspoken Smiles

The year-long Fellowship provides hands-on experience in community engagement, prevention-focused healthcare, leadership development, and public health advocacy. Fellows support school-based oral health education, community outreach programs, preventive care campaigns, and access-to-care initiatives throughout Costa Rica and beyond.

A defining feature of the Fellowship is its commitment to creating opportunities that many students might not otherwise have access to.

Several alumni fellows have obtained U.S. visas for the first time through opportunities associated with the program, enabling them to attend the Greater New York Dental Meeting—one of the world's largest gatherings of dental professionals. Others have received recommendation letters supporting postgraduate studies abroad, expanded their professional networks internationally, and gained access to pediatric patients needed to complete university



clinical requirements.

In a groundbreaking collaboration, [ULACIT](#) faculty members will begin supervising fellows weekly at the new Unspoken Smiles Clinic in San José. Through this model, students can provide treatment to patients who cannot afford traditional university clinic fees while simultaneously earning academic credit toward their clinical competencies and graduation requirements.



Unspoken Smiles Clinic

The initiative addresses one of the most significant challenges faced by many dental students: finding patients and covering the costs associated with completing required clinical procedures.

For patients, the model expands access to care.

For students, it reduces financial barriers while providing valuable clinical experience.

For communities, it creates a sustainable pathway to treatment.

"This model is unlike anything currently available in the region," Laurent said. "Families receive care they otherwise might not access. Students complete requirements without the financial burden of recruiting and subsidizing patients. Universities strengthen community engagement. Everyone benefits."

The Fellowship is supported through the continued partnership of ULACIT and generous in-kind contributions from [FIGS](#) and Axiom2, whose support helps provide educational resources, professional apparel and development opportunities, and training experiences throughout the year.

As oral health gains increasing recognition as a critical component of overall health, the Unspoken Smiles Fellowship is demonstrating how innovative partnerships between nonprofits, universities, and communities can strengthen the oral health workforce while expanding access to care.

"The future of oral health will not be built in clinics alone—it will be built by young leaders who choose prevention over complacency and service over silence," Laurent added.

About the Unspoken Smiles Fellowship

The Unspoken Smiles Fellowship is a leadership development and service-learning program designed to empower students and emerging professionals committed to advancing oral health equity. Through mentorship, experiential learning, clinical practice, public health leadership, international outreach, and community engagement, fellows gain the skills needed to become leaders in healthcare, social impact, and global health.

About Unspoken Smiles

Unspoken Smiles is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to making oral healthcare accessible to underserved communities through prevention-focused programs, education, leadership development, and strategic partnerships. Since its founding, the organization has worked across the Americas to ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy, cavity-free, and able to reach their full potential.

Welcome to the 2026 Class of Unspoken Smiles Fellows.

The future of oral health in the Americas is brighter because of you.

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