

FEATURE



Donald Trump Jr.:  
**Beyond Lip Service**

By GRACE DIEZ

Privileged. Successful. Self-assured. These are attributes that perfectly describe businessman Donald “Don” Trump Jr. And just like his world-renowned father and namesake Donald Trump, Don Jr. bears a captivating presence — the kind that hypnotizes as he speaks. He uses this particular trait to work for a cause that’s close to his heart: Operation Smile.

**P**edigree may have played a role in the life that Don Jr. leads, but a simple exchange with him would make anyone conclude that he is indeed a passionate individual, not only when it comes to real estate and property management, but also in the advocacies he supports. One such organization that he feels strongly for is “Operation Smile,” an international charity that provides free surgery and medical care to children and young adults afflicted with cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities.

Don Jr. recently flew to Manila, along with his younger brother Eric, for the groundbreaking ceremonies of the soon-to-rise Trump Tower that will grace the Metro Manila skyline. This venture with Century Properties, not only involved an inauguration activity, but also a fundraising dinner for the benefit of Operation Smile Philippines (OSP). Century Properties Group, Inc. managing director Robbie Antonio is also a supporter of the cause as a member of the OSP Board of Trustees.

**Passion for Operation Smile**

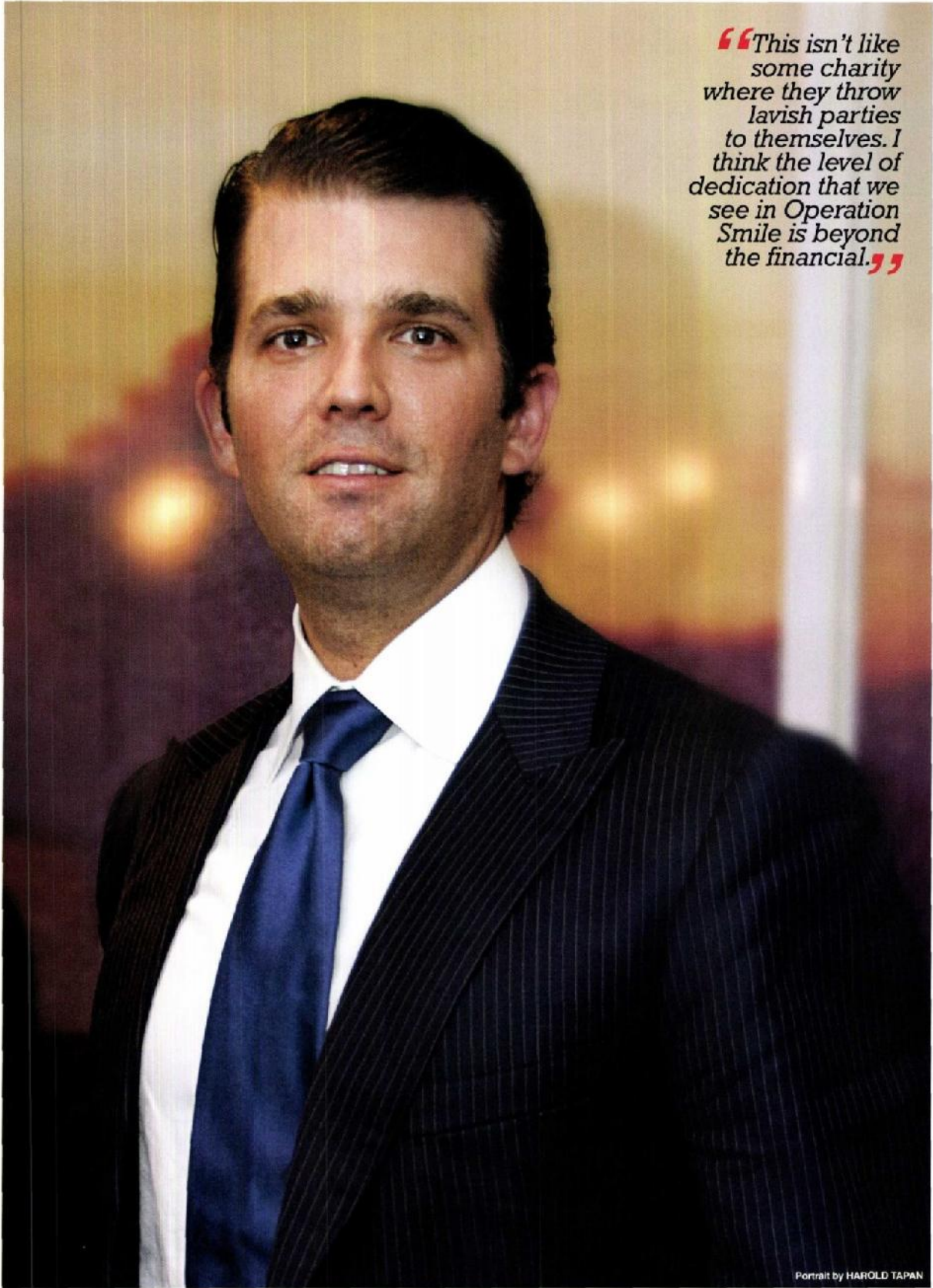
As part of the board of governors for Operation Smile International (OSI), Don Jr. enthusiastically traces back his involvement with the organization. “I got involved almost 10 years ago and still am to this day. A lot of my friends have worked for the charity throughout high school and college. Many of them went on to become doctors and donate a lot of their time to Operation Smile,” he says, clearly inspired by his friends’ endeavors.

“I was sort of on — what we call in New York City — the ‘rubber chicken dinner circuit,’ where every night you’re in a different charity function, where most of the people don’t often know why they’re even there. I realized this isn’t really for me. I really want to support something that I can take control over, have some sort of ownership of and really grow it,” he confesses.

Along with some friends who are early supporters of Operation Smile, Don Jr. started off a fairly small group that was able to raise \$100,000 in their first New York fundraiser.

“We grew that very substantially over the coming years. We found out recently that the New York presence alone has raised enough money to do over 50,000 operations for children all over the world. And to do this now for the Philippines feels great because it is where it all started 30 years ago,” Don Jr. says. To celebrate the upcoming 30th anniversary of the organization, there will be a homecoming medical mission slated from October until December this year.

(ABOVE) Eric Trump, Robbie Antonio, Donald Trump Jr., Bb. Pilipinas 2012 Jarine Tugonon and Mayor Alfredo Lim with the beneficiaries of Operation Smile



*“This isn’t like some charity where they throw lavish parties to themselves. I think the level of dedication that we see in Operation Smile is beyond the financial.”*

Portrait by HAROLD TAPAN



Operation Smile Philippines president Bobby Marzano, Eric Trump, Donald Trump Jr., Sen. Pia Cayetano and Robbie Antonio witnessing a harelip surgery at OSP's Manila Cleft Care Center

### Partnership with Century Properties

Century Properties, the developer of the 56-storey Trump Tower, has strong ties with the Trumps. Robbie is friends with Ivanka Trump, the stylish yet down-to-earth Trump heiress, and it was she who introduced Robbie to her brothers Don Jr. and Eric, as well as their dad. Asked if their shared vision for Operation Smile helped cement their relationship, the two businessmen share their thoughts.

"First and foremost, Century Properties and the Trump brothers are dedicating half of their visit to Operation Smile. That's how much we value it. We could have just talked about business, but we're dedicating a good amount of time to visit the Manila Cleft Care Center and raise funds for Operation Smile — something important to both of us. It's not lip service, especially for Don Jr., who has been at this longer than I have. We both believe in this cause," Robbie discloses.

Both Don Jr. and Robbie cook up strategies and plans to financially support and raise funds for Operation Smile. "This isn't like some charity where they throw lavish parties to themselves and think that if there's something left for the charity — great! But if there's none, they don't care. I think the level of dedication that we see in Operation Smile is beyond the financial," Don Jr. frankly states.

The laughter and comical banter exchanged between Robbie and Don show how comfortable they are in each other's company. Both generously shared remarkable moments from their experiences with Operation Smile.

"Prior to the operation, parents (of the afflicted children) could be thinking it's a hopeless situation for their child — the child may not be able to speak properly, may not be able to eat effectively, may grow up with all sorts of nutritional deficiencies, may be ostracized and other kids don't want to play with them. So to see that joy in the parents' eyes and them realizing that their child is going to have the same chance in life that other kids have is truly special and amazing," Don Jr. explains.

He continues passionately, "It's also remarkable to scrub in and see the volunteer doctors at work. Like Dr. Bill Magee, the Operation Smile founder, who has done 7,000 of these operations pro bono,

all gratis. And we're dealing with formal and serious, top-in-class surgeons who dedicate a generous amount of time and expertise to this cause. I do my share to allow the doctors to keep doing it. There's a shortage of people in this world who are like that."

Robbie also explains their roles in Operation Smile: "Both Don and I sit behind our desks and make calls to raise awareness and money — we're more effective that way. God did not give us the skills to cure people, but we try to leverage off our talents to contribute in our own little ways."

### On the home front

Don may be serving as executive vice president of The Trump Organization and as an onscreen observer for *The Apprentice* (the TV show that his dad hosts) but he is never too busy for his growing family. He has been married to model Vanessa Haydon Trump for seven years now and they have three kids, namely Kai Madison, Donald John Trump III or "Donnie", Tristan Milos and they're expecting their fourth child this October.

As both husband and wife actively participate in Operation Smile, one can't help but wonder how he imparts this value of helping to their children. Before giving the actual answer, Don acknowledges their privileged upbringing, but is quick to add that they are also grounded enough to not take it for granted. He goes on to say that his mother Ivana Trump and electrician grandfather in Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic) are no strangers to blue-collar jobs.

"I spent two months with my grandfather in the Czech Republic every summer, so I had a very good understanding at a very young age that the life I lead in New York City with my family was not the norm for the world. And I learned to give back to people who have not been so fortunate.

"With my own children, my oldest is five right now, there's an element of parenting that says you can't have everything you want. It's not because we can't afford it, but because you have to learn to earn it and learn to respect the value of a dollar. My children don't quite get it yet but, hopefully, that lesson will stick and they'll be able to come to that conclusion on their own in time," the real estate seion concludes with a smile. ■