

Local dentistry reaches out

BY KASSIE PETERMANN • SUN NEWSPAPERS

Ascent Family Dentistry in Columbia Heights is bringing smiles to the faces of children and others in need.

Since 2005, Ascent has participated in the Donated Dental Services program, which serves disabled, elderly or medically compromised people who don't receive public aid and can't afford needed treatment.

"There are people that are in dire need of having dental work done, and we often provide very major work for free," said Dr. Todd Johnson, who has been with Ascent for 31 years.

"They are people that are down on their luck and they come to us," he said.

According to the Dental Lifeline Network website, at least one program coordinator in each state is responsible for determining that applicants are eligible for free dental care.

Dr. Alexis Simonson, who has been with Ascent for about two months, said cases are sent to them after a screening process is conducted.

"We've done crowns on people that would normally be possibly a \$1,400 service. We do the work for free and the labs will make the crowns for free," Johnson said.

In addition to the Donated Dental Services program, Ascent participates

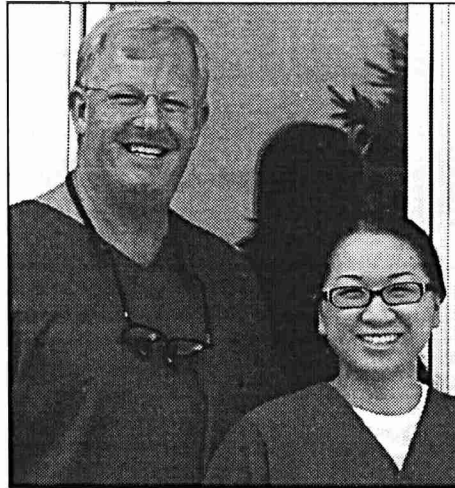
in the annual Give Kids A Smile event through the Minnesota Dental Association. Each February throughout the state, dentists volunteer their time and resources to provide free care to children who have applied through United Way.

"That's really been a nice program, and we really see great compliments from the patients. ... It's a lot of fun. It's tough, but it's very rewarding," Johnson said.

"We feel happy that we're able to help out the community," he said. "It's also come back to where people are referring other patients to us. We're always accepting new patients."

Ascent Family dentistry is located at 5207 University Ave. N.E. in Columbia Heights.

For more information, visit mndental.org, nfdh.org or call Ascent Family Dentistry at 763-572-8040.



Dr. Todd Johnson and Dr. Alexis Simonson
(Submitted photo)

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