

TULSA WORLD

Volunteer dentists fill a void



By [GARY D. BURNIDGE](#)

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If you're like me, the daily news makes it difficult to comprehend man's inhumanity to man. Genocide in Africa. Terrorism throughout the world. Muslims and Jews killing each other in the Holy Land over religious convictions masked as a territorial dispute. Senseless loss of life in our own community.

At times, we need to remind ourselves that a few evil and foolish people can't allow us to conclude man is demonstrably an evil species.

This town, this state and this country are made up of that law-abiding majority who fear God, respect authority and obey the law. Our people have a generosity and compassion for others unmatched in the world. I'm a native Kansan, but the caring and compassion we, Oklahomans, have for the indigent is unmatched and here's the proof.

In my profession alone, 227 Tulsa area dentists who belong to Eastern Oklahoma Donated Dental Services have set a national standard in service to the less fortunate. In 2008 alone, we provided nearly \$2.5 million worth of free dental services to qualified indigent Tulsa-area patients. These services are delivered in your dentist's private office during regular hours, side by side with paying patients, and your dentist receives no compensation of any kind.

Some 1,280 patients, mostly disabled and elderly poor, received comprehensive dental care relieving pain, restoring their ability to chew, and creating a smile once forgotten. No region in the country comes close to these numbers in dental services for those in need.

So, yes,

I'm justifiably proud of my fellow dentists and their staffs who provide these services to those who have nowhere else to turn. And, on behalf of the board of directors of this organization, our member dentists, and the patients we are privileged to serve, we extend our thanks to the community philanthropic organizations that have provided funding for our administrative staff and dental laboratory fees.

That recognition begins with the Zarrow families and the Tulsa City-County Health Department which were the first to generously fund our organization when we began operations in 2003. We are proud to now also count the names

Kaiser, Chapman, Oxley, Bovaird, Bernsen, Hille, Anderson, Flint, Delta Dental, Tulsa Area Aging Agency and Tulsa Area United Way as partners.

There really aren't adequate words to recognize the love and compassion that is delivered by this charitable organization. So, to EODDS Board of Directors, member dentists and their staffs, and our funding organizations, this will have to do. Thank you. Thank you all.

Gary D. Burnidge, DDS, was a founding board member of Eastern Oklahoma Donated Dental Services and is a member of the Tulsa City-County Health Department Board of Directors. EODDS is a qualified 501(c)3 charity and inquiries may be directed to the staff office at 742-5544.

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