



Photo for the Tribune by Dianne Brogan

Dr. Ted Siegel examines the smile of one of his regulars, Paula Perez, with brother Daniel Perez and dental assistant Jessica Soto close by.

Dentist offers a day of free care to fill a painful need

Last Valentine's Day, Dr. Ted Siegel opened his office to those in need, offering a day of free dental services.

It was such a success—he and a half-dozen colleagues treated more than 250 patients, performing 150 extractions and providing more than \$100,000 in free dental care—that they're doing it again July 31. But this time, for kids.

"All these kids need back-to-school exams or cleanings or just might need the work," Siegel said. "Everyone who comes that day gets a free exam, free X-rays, free cleaning, fluoride treatment, and we'll fill out any paperwork they need

to get back in school."

Siegel added that the Valentine's Day experience was "probably the best day of my life as a dentist."

The doors opened at 9 a.m., but people were lined up at 3:30 in the morning.

"I can't explain how good that makes you feel," he said of the charity work. "My hands were actually healing and helping the people who needed it the most. Nobody waits out in the middle of winter for 6 hours to have teeth pulled and cleaned unless they really need it. When it was all over—we wound up staying there till

midnight—I asked, 'Wanna do this again next year?' And it was, 'Oh, my God, of course.' That was when I realized everyone with me had the same feeling of what we'd accomplished that day."

The back-to-school session is set for 9 a.m. July 31 at Big Smile Dental, 2833 N. Milwaukee Ave. It's first-come, first-served, and patients—they have to be 20 or younger—must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. For more information, visit BigSmileDental.com or call 773-772-8400.

—William Hageman