

## Modesto dental clinic shines

Local dentists help restore smiles, self-esteem.

The Salvation Army's Berbarian Shelter and Transitional Living Center in Modesto, Calif., opened a dental clinic on August 30—the second such facility in the Western Territory, Oxnard, Calif., being the first. Registered Dental Assistant Carrie Ann Pimentel runs the clinic, which is available a few days a month to current residents of the facility's transitional living center as well as current and former residents of the emergency shelter.

“As the clinic coordinator, I love my job,” Pimentel said. “I get to work with our clients every day and get to see them from the start to the finish of their dental treatment. Just to see the look on their faces after we are able to help them with their dental problems is such an amazing feeling of doing God's service.”

Many of the clients need teeth pulled, fillings and nearly all need cleanings. Pimentel said the clinic has already served 16 clients. Modesto-based oral and maxillofacial surgeon, Dr. Michael Cadra, has volunteered his time to provide extractions for many of the patients.

One client, Lauro Ramirez, was struggling with an array of health issues including dental disease. The infections from Ramirez's teeth were affecting his overall health. Dr. Cadra took a special interest in Ramirez's case. He was able to provide the care Ramirez needed while addressing the unique concerns associated with his medical history. Since the oral surgery, Ramirez's overall health has noticeably improved.

“My stomach is not as swollen as it used to be and I have more energy,” Ramirez said.

Dr. Elizabeth Demichelis, a Modesto general dentist, has provided dental screenings for close to a dozen clients. She noted that the effects of poor dental health impact more than just a patient's physical well-being.

“As a dentist, it is troubling to see such rampant untreated dental disease in our community,” Demichelis said. “This can lead to other medical conditions that not only physically impact the patient,



but also may cause a loss of self-esteem or have other psychological effects.”

Pimentel said they are focused on their current patients for the time being, but plan to expand in the future.

“The dental care we provide isn’t a hand out—it is a hand up for better overall health,” Demichelis said. “As dentists, we receive more from our patients than we give through the priceless smiles we revitalize.”