

Free dental work 'From the Heart' turns 30

By CATHERINE J. ROURKE
For the Siuslaw News

Folks in Florence will have plenty of reason to smile on Aug. 25, thanks to Wendy and Charles Korando, DDS. While the erosion of dental health coverage takes a giant bite out of wallets across the nation, the Korandos open their practice doors and big hearts to the local community with free dentistry each year.

"Our mission is to provide care to the needy and alleviate their suffering," Dr. Korando said. "We strive to treat as many patients as possible who cannot afford dentistry since the current system places such a crushing economic burden on them."

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, more than 130 million Americans — one-third of the population — lack dental insurance, including 27 percent of children under 19 and 23 percent of seniors over 65. Studies released last year by the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute show that untreated dental diseases have reached the highest level in four decades, especially among working adults ages 20 to 64, citing high costs and lack of coverage as the cause.

Dr. Korando found this silent epidemic "so deeply disturbing" that he decided to do something about it long before health care shortfalls became a rallying cry at national political conventions. Every year on "From the Heart Dentistry Day," he and his wife, Wendy, a dental nurse, along with their two sons — Ryan, a dentist, and Nolan, a dental anesthesiologist — and their staff at the Korando Dental Group provide free dental services.

Founded as a 501c3 nonprofit

organization in 2008, "From the Heart Dentistry Day" accommodates approximately 50 to 80 individuals each year with cleanings, extractions and restoration work for 12 hours nonstop, from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"We take anybody," Wendy said. "People are lined up at the door and some even camp out the night before, so we put portable potties in the parking lot. Many local businesses donate their services to help make this free dental day possible."

"It's so rewarding to see people finally getting relief that we're not even exhausted at the end of the day," Dr. Korando said. "When you give, you get so much back."

From the day they opened their local practice in 1985, the Korandos dreamed of providing dentistry to "marginalized and special-needs populations" who cannot afford it. They began offering free services on Christmas Eve 30 years ago.

"We also wanted to teach our children to give freely and compassionately to their fellow man," Wendy said.

The Korandos estimate that, to date, they have provided free treatments valued at half a million dollars to more than 1,500 patients. But it took many years of hard work to achieve that generous capacity.

"We knew dentistry was our destiny," Wendy said. "But we were so poor and broke in the beginning and started out with nothing."

The aspiring dentist and student nurse met at a party just one day before he was drafted into the Vietnam War. They corresponded while Charles served in the 196th Infantry Battalion and began dating after he returned home.

They married a few years later and will mark their 40th anniversary this year.



PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

The Korandos will host their annual "From the Heart Dentistry Day" on Thursday, Aug. 25, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"I took one look at Wendy and knew she was going to be my wife," he said. "We had some tough times and her support is the main reason for my success. There's material poverty, which is temporary, but we were spiritually wealthy and believed in miracles."

A huge miracle showed up one Christmas Eve in the form of a National Institute for Health Public Scholarship for Charles.

"We were told he would never get it," she said. "But he did and it was a Christmas gift worth \$200,000. That's when I learned to never take no for an answer."

Upon graduation from Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, Dr. Korando spent three years "working nonstop" as the only

dentist serving 15,000 people on the Indian reservations of northeastern Montana. He recalls sub-zero winters and often treating "15 full boney impactions before lunch."

Then, the Korandos learned about a practice for sale in Florence and fell in love with its natural beauty.

"It reminded me of where I grew up," Dr. Korando said, referring to a tiny farm community in Illinois. "Florence has a small-town feeling; you can know everybody and the shopkeepers know you. I knew this was where I wanted to raise my children."

Wendy worked as a registered nurse at the local hospital and joined the dental practice in 1992. The couple volunteered for Rotary-sponsored dental missions to Mexico and

then decided to bring them home.

"We realized our true mission was in our local community," Wendy said. "The desperate, heart-wrenching need for dental care for hundreds of underserved people right here is staggering. Our event helps relieve a crushing demand for compassionate dentistry."

"This isn't just about teeth; it's about the heart," Dr. Korando said. "We're acknowledging people, alleviating suffering and turning lives around."

In some cases, the Korandos have even saved them. By checking vital signs and identifying dental infections spreading to other parts of the body, they have referred patients to the hospital in the nick of time. Their goal is to expand the event with more frequency to a wider region and establish an oral surgery center with reduced costs, especially for youth and children.

"We aim to fill the gap between the destitute and the insured," Dr. Korando said. "Why should just those who can pay cash or have great insurance be the only ones with a healthy mouth and a great smile? We need a health system that prevents people from falling into the cracks."

The Korando Dental Group is located at 1705 W. 22nd St. Grab your sleeping bag and get in line for the upcoming event — no toothbrush necessary since the staff will have plenty on hand. Meanwhile, Dr. Korando offers this advice: "A piece of floss is the best dental insurance at just \$1.98."

Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning writer, journalist and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She may be contacted at CJREditor@gmail.com.

Prevent heat illness while working in hot weather

As temperatures rise this summer, Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) encourages employers and workers in construction, agriculture and other labor-intensive activities to learn the signs of heat illness and focus on prevention.

Exposure to heat can lead to headaches, cramps, dizziness, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, and even seizures or death.

From 2011 through 2015, 28 people received benefits through Oregon's workers' compensation system for heat-related illnesses (at least three days away from work).

"Workers in Oregon tend to be more likely to suffer from heat-related illnesses, because they're used to working in mild weather and often not acclimated to this type of heat," said Penny Wolf-McCormick,

health enforcement manager for Oregon OSHA. "That's why it's especially important for employers to provide drinking water, offer shaded places for workers to take breaks, and to watch for signs of trouble."

Here are some tips for preventing a heat-related illness:

- Perform the heaviest, most labor-intensive work during the coolest part of the day.
- Use the buddy system to monitor the heat.
- Drink plenty of cool water — one small cup every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable clothing, such as cotton.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool, shaded areas — allow your body to cool down.
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments.

• Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages (these make the body lose water and increase the risk of heat illnesses).

To help those suffering from heat exhaustion:

- Move them to a cool, shaded area. Do not leave them alone.
- Loosen and remove heavy clothing.
- Provide cool water to drink (a small cup every 15 minutes) if they are not feeling sick to their stomach.
- Try to cool them by fanning them. Cool the skin with a spray mist of cold water or a wet cloth.
- If they do not feel better in a few minutes, call 911 for emergency help. Certain medications, wearing personal protective equipment while on the job and a past case of heat stress create a higher risk for

heat illness.

Heat stroke is a more severe condition than heat exhaustion and can result in death. Immediately call for emer-

gency help if you think the person is suffering from heat stroke.

Employers can calculate the heat index for their worksite

with the federal OSHA heat stress app for mobile phones.

The tool is available at www.osha.gov/SLTC/heat_illness/heat_index/heat_app.htm.

Realtors plan food drive Aug. 13

Saturday, Aug. 13, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will mark the Central Oregon Coast Board of Realtors second annual community food drive in cooperation with the local Florence Bi-Mart store. Everyone is encouraged again this year to

stop by Bi-Mart and make a generous contribution to this important community effort.

All food contributed will be presented to Florence Food Share for distribution among the members of the Florence community.

In addition to food, financial gifts toward hunger can be given to Realtors present at Bi-Mart.

Florence Food Share can provide three meals for every single dollar contributed at the food drive.

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How To Participate

The fee to participate is \$20. An ad for the Community Wide Garage Sale with a map of all participating sales will be published in the Siuslaw News on September 7th and 10th. Because of print deadlines, the registration deadline is 5pm August 30 2016.

You will also receive two official Community Wide Garage Sale signs as well as a tip sheet on how to have a great sale. Please post signs only on private property with the owner's consent. Posting signs on City utility poles, street or signal light poles, and median strips is against the municipal code.

Additional maps will be available at the Florence Visitors Center and the Siuslaw News.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Subdivision name (if any) _____

Dates (CIRCLE): Friday 9/9 Saturday 9/10 Sunday 9/11 Times: _____

15-word description:

Add'l _____

Date, times and address are included. Additional words over 15 are \$0.50 each.

Bring form and payment to 148 Maple St in Historic Old Town or mail to Siuslaw News PO Box 10, Florence, OR 97439
Call 541-902-3526
Online www.florencechamber.com
Deadline is August 30th at 5pm to be included on the map.


