

A Lifetime of Smiles

World's nicest dentist might be considered faint praise in some circles. But Dr. Jack Von Bulow is a dentist that can get you smiling with more than his professional skills.

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The meaning of “a trip to the dentist” has sadly, transcended such a specific trip itself and gone on to stand in rhetorically for all manner of things you’d rather not put yourself through.

Fortunately, there is at least one dentist who renders that stereotype ridiculous. Dr. Jack Von Bulow might just be the world’s nicest dentist.

A product of Mark Keppel High School in Alhambra, California State University, Los Angeles and the University of Southern California Dental School, Von Bulow began practicing in Temple City “around late disco,” as he says, where his business still resides. He welcomed me into his homey, inviting waiting room where a sign proclaims the office mission: “Making a world-class difference for others and making dentistry fun.”

Given the abundant community outreach and charitable activities Von Bulow and his team are engaged in, it’s a wonder there is still time for dentistry. He was on the board at Haven House, an organization he loves, for six years, where he helped build their teen center. He’s worked with Childcare Information Service of Pasadena and with Rosemary’s Children-providing services to help heal abused and neglected children. Every year he and his team do free teeth screenings at local schools, and this past Thanksgiving, engineered a food drive that collected over a thousand pounds of food for local, underprivileged children and families. Additionally, with his office manager Dana, who engineered the program, they developed “Tooth Prints.”

The first of its kind in California, the program had children throughout the district bite into compression material that would provide a DNA record and a permanent “Tooth Print” that could be used for later identification. The collection process was coordinated with local law enforcement personnel who conducted coincident child safety awareness meetings.

When I express some amazement at the sheer volume of his good work, he says simply, “Oh, it’s definitely our pleasure, that’s for sure.” Perhaps closest to Von Bulow’s heart is his work with the Crown Council and Smiles for Life. The Crown Council is a membership organization that members must be invited to join. Originally focused around continuing education for dental professionals, and still providing those services, Von Bulow says the council is made up of, “pretty progressive people that have a sincere interest in giving back to the community.”

Smiles For Life grew out of a regional Crown Council meeting in San Diego. The brainchild of San Diego dentist Jeff Gray, Von Bulow knew they were on to something as soon as he heard it. March through June, each year starting in 1998, participating dentists provide reduced-rate teeth whitening services with all proceeds going to charity. The money is split between local charities of the dentists’ choice and organizations such as the Pasadena Ronald McDonald House and St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital in Memphis, chosen by the national organization. Since its inception, the organization has raised over \$35 million for charity. Von Bulow has been leading the charge from the beginning. “We’re all able to pitch in together and help each other out and then in turn, make a difference for people we don’t even know personally,” he says. “I just knew from the start, ‘this was an awesome idea.’”

He’s set some pretty aggressive fundraising goals for his team this year, but he’s backing up the effort in a big way. If they make their goals, Dr. V will wear a tutu for the day, and take a pie in the face...on video. Given his record of success, let’s hope Von Bulow likes pie.

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