

Dentist donates services in program with Dress for Success

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By Erich Hiner

Correspondent@News-Herald.com

As a dentist, Eastlake's Dr. Jeffrey Gross understands the value of a good smile. That's why he decided to give them out for free.

Gross performed free cleanings, checkups and whitenings for 10 area women Monday as a part of "Smile for Success," a program put on by Gross' practice, located at 34586 Lake Shore Blvd., and the Cleveland branch of Dress for Success, a nonprofit that helps women find and keep jobs by providing interview tips and free business attire.

Gross said the free services were a way to give back to the community during tough economic times. People often allow their oral health to slide when money gets tight, he said. Offering free care was a way to help those negatively affected by the economy.

Gross said he partnered with Dress for Success because he wanted to help the clients find jobs. They are more likely to impress interviewers if the women have good teeth, he said.

"Part of getting back into the market place is having a healthy, attractive smile," Gross said. "It says something about a person."

Dress for Success focuses on helping its clients improve their appearances to bolster their self-confidence. While the organization focuses mainly on clothes, organizers said applicants' smiles are also important.

"That smile is just as important as that resume today," said Melony Butler, manager of employment retention programs for Dress for Success Cleveland. "Being able to smile with ease, smile with confidence is critical."

Dress for Success found candidates for the free dental care by holding an essay contest among its current and past clients. The top 10 essayists were offered free care.

Among those who received free care was former Dress for Success client Laura Reeves of Mentor. Reeves said she had to skip routine teeth cleanings because she was unable to pay for them. She said the free services would be very helpful because of her sizeable medical bills. Having attractive teeth at no cost will be a blessing, she said.

"I've always hated my teeth," Reeves said. "The first time in my life having white teeth will be a miracle."

In addition to helping patients look good, the care also helped them improve their oral health, said Carol Mart Saferin, president of Mart Saferin & Associates, the marketing firm that helped Gross organize the event.

Saferin said minor dental problems can become serious and costly over time if they are not treated. The patients were able to protect themselves from serious problems because of the free care, she said.

Gross said he was happy to perform the procedures without pay and that he was grateful for the chance to help those in need.

"I'm glad I have the capability and the ability to give something back to the community at large," Gross said.

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