

## Service keeps smiles healthy

By Geoff Parks

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When the subject of tooth decay comes up, Jodi Loper, Kelli Jaecks and Elisa Schofield want to talk about their specialty: prevention.

Schofield is a registered dental hygienist, a member of the Boys & Girls Club of Salem's Health Services Center board, and the president of Marion-Polk-Yamhill Dental Hygienists' Association. Loper is the Boys & Girls Club center's coordinator, and Jaecks is the new president of the Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association.

The three gathered in the Health Services Center's three-chaired dental clinic at the club's Summer Street headquarters to discuss the center and the importance of the preventive services it provides to students in need at no cost to the family.

"A common gift at Christmastime a number of years ago was a set of dentures," she said.

"While we're now growing old with our original teeth, back then, if a tooth had a bad cavity, it would be shown the sunshine. Stories like that are what drives dental hygiene because cavities are 100 percent preventable," Schofield said.

The club's Health Services Center started seven years ago as a way for low-income families to access free dental services, Loper said. In May, it was given a Merit Award from the MetLife Foundation for its service.

"It's especially important for those who don't have any insurance and who don't qualify for the Oregon Health Plan," she said. "We currently have over 850 (clients) here."

The center also partners with Marion County Health Department to provide immunizations, flu shots and other services, and with the national program Sight for Students to provide vision screenings.

"Every month, some of our (Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association) members volunteer at the center," Jaecks said.

Loper said the center holds evening screenings the second Wednesday of each month.

"We all can be part of the solution to the oral health-care crisis because for every 8 cents we spend on prevention, we save \$64 on treatment," Jaecks said.



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Kelli Jaecks, the new president of the Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association, cleans the teeth of Jose Alvarez, 12, in the dental clinic of the Boys & Girls Club in Salem.

### Free screening

A free dental screening for students in prekindergarten to high school will be 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Health Services Center of the Boys & Girls Club, 1395 Summer St. NE. Contact Jodi Loper, the center coordinator, at (503) 581-7383 or [jloper@bgc-salem.org](mailto:jloper@bgc-salem.org).