

Rocky Hill

Volunteers

A smile makes a big difference

Dentist helps victims of domestic abuse

by Alicia B. Smith

A slide show feature on his business computer shows improved smile after improved smile. A cap there, a veneer here and some whitening can make a world of difference to his patients.

Some of the patients having the work done are college students, another is in his 70s.

"The difference it makes in people's lives, cosmetic dentistry, the reactions people have, the confidence — it's amazing," said Dr. Thaddeus Michalski.

These cosmetic procedures can change the life of an ordinary person. But imagine what they could do for someone who had damage done because they were abused?

Dr. Michalski is a volunteer with Give Back a Smile, a non-profit foundation of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, that provides free cosmetic dental services to victims of domestic violence.

The program was started in 1999 and there are now more than 6,000 dentists across the country who volunteer their services along with dental assistants and lab technicians.

Since its inception, more than 600 cases have been completed.

Victims can call 1-800-773-GBAS (4227) to set up an appointment with a counselor or other advocate to complete an application.

Applications are reviewed by GBAS, however dentists have the final say as to whether or not an applicant is eligible.

The AACD then makes the connection with the victim and the volunteer dentist.

Dr. Michalski has been a volunteer with GBAS for two years.

"There are so many ways you want to give back," he said, adding that some colleagues travel out of the country offering their services to the less fortunate, but for Dr. Michalski "I found this a nice fit."

Lori Stanczyk of youth services in town explained that victims have many options for getting help, especially here in Rocky Hill.

She said there is always 9-1-1 for those who may need help immediately.

In addition, victims can call 2-1-1, which is an infoline that will direct them to a number of domestic abuse services in the state.

Sgt. Joe Vernali of the police department said that victims are referred to the court in New Britain, which has assistance available. In addition, his department works closely with the town's Human Services Department.

"We'll typically respond to hear what the complaint is," Sergeant Vernali said. "If there is any sign of violence, in keeping with the state statute, we are obligated to arrest."

Violence in domestic abuse cases refers to obvious bruises, cuts or redness, but can also extend to an individual at the scene who is throwing things, whether at a specific target or not.

"If a person is acting recklessly, they would be subject to arrest," he said.

Following his four-year stint in the Marines, Dr. Michalski, a South Windsor native, attended the University of Connecticut and the University of Florida.

He returned to Connecticut and worked as an associate in a few area offices before taking over a practice in town in 2002.

His office is tucked into a commercial space in the Stepney Apartments at 1800 Silas Deane Highway.



Dr. Thaddeus Michalski volunteers his time and skills to help victims of domestic violence.

Patients enter the building after punching in a security code at the door.

It's something the dentist said patients do not like to do. That will change, however, as Dr. Michalski has just broken ground on a new office in the west end of town.

Although he is a general dentist, his area of interest is in cosmetic dentistry and Dr. Michalski is a member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.

This area covers everything from teeth whitening to replacing silver fillings with tooth-colored bonding and porcelain veneers, crowns and replacing missing teeth.

Dr. Michalski said his interest in dentistry developed when a college friend talked about getting into the field.

When he thought about it, he realized it could be something he would enjoy.

His father was a carpenter and passed on his interest in working with his hands to his son. Dr. Michalski was interested in the science and health aspects of the field too. **RHL**

For further information

Dee Hession, 621-7878

Janice Paul, 758-1380

Marsha Nagler

Nagler Interior Concepts, 521-4337

Ron Smith

Chapter I, 693-9033 or 523-8131

Kathleen Godiksen

Studio K, 559-8236

kathygpaints.com

Dana Herbert

Interior Paint by Design, 459-9151

interiorpaintbydesign.com