



Angelica Blenich Echo staff

Dr. Bill Kerr, centre, cuts the official ribbon on June 17 at the Haliburton Legion with wife Lisa by his side to commemorate the grand opening of the Volunteer Dental Outreach clinic for Haliburton County. For the past few months Bill and his wife Lisa have been spearheading the project, which provides free dentistry to low-income adults in the county.

Room full of smiles at opening of volunteer dental clinic

Angelica Blenich
Staff reporter

It all started in Honduras with a dream shared by two dental professionals.

On June 17, a room full of smiling people celebrated the opening of the Volunteer Dental Outreach Clinic and the people who made the project a reality.

Held at the Haliburton Legion and the dental clinic, located at 739 Mountain Street, the celebration congratulated a community who worked tirelessly to complete the clinic, which offers free dentistry to low-income adults.

"We're here to celebrate the dream Bill and Lisa Stoughton had and to celebrate the volunteers who made this project a reality," said master of ceremonies Roxanne Casey.

Kerr went on to thank a lengthy list of contributors to the project, which included local contractors, businesspeople, politicians and organizations.

"So many people gave their time, money,

materials and ideas to make this project happen," he said.

Kerr specifically thanked his wife Lisa for becoming immensely involved in the project and being "unbelievably supportive."

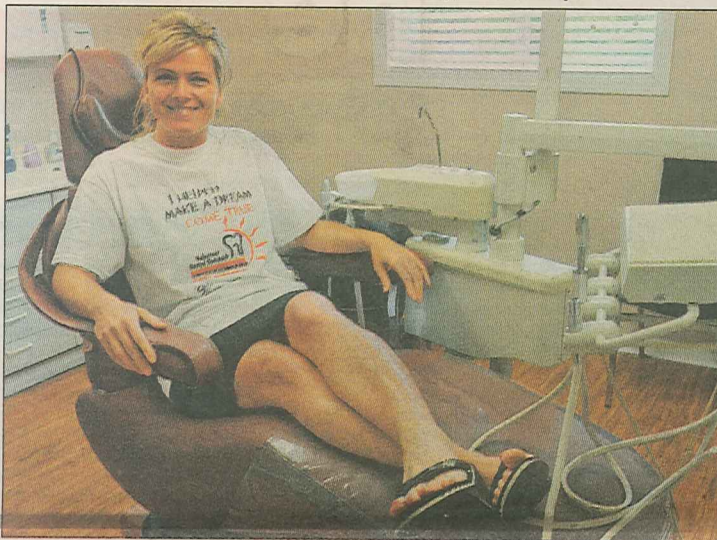
"It's a privilege to bring this to our community," said Lisa Kerr.

"Now that the clinic is open our focus has shifted from building a clinic to running a clinic," said Kerr.

Facilitated through SIRCH Community Services, the clinic has been up and operating since June 8, and currently has seven volunteer dentists, six hygienists and a number of dental assistant and receptionists.

According to Lisa, the clinic has seen more than 40 patients so far and provided \$10,000 of free dentistry.

The celebration included words of congratulations from MP Barry Devolin, a message on behalf of MPP Rick Johnson and Haliburton County Warden Murray Farrey.



Dental hygienist Lisa Stoughton is all smiles as she gave tours at the open house for the Volunteer Dental Outreach Clinic on June 17. Located at 739 Mountain Street in Haliburton, the clinic provides free dentistry to low-income adults in the county.

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One year later

Volunteer Dental Outreach nears one-year target in dental services

It's been one year since the seeds were planted for the Volunteer Dental Outreach for Haliburton County (VDO). Within weeks after the outreach's founding members called their first planning meeting on Dec. 17, 2010, dozens of partnerships were formed and a need in the community was recognized.

Just seven months ago, on May 19, the doors to the VDO – located at 739 Mountain St. in Haliburton – opened. As of Dec. 13 this year, volunteer dentists and their teams had seen 129 patients in 450 appointments – and provided a staggering \$145,000 in free dental treatments.

It originally was the group's goal to provide \$150,000 worth of work after their first year of operation – a target that will likely be reached before the new year.

"This clinic exists because of the community effort it took to build and support it," said Lisa Kerr, one of the clinic's founders, in an email. "Thousands of hours of people's donated time to build, run and fund the clinic have lead to the success."

Kerr and her husband Bill, a dentist with a practice in Scarborough, came up with the idea for the VDO along with local hygienist Lisa Stoughton. Their vision was largely inspired by mission trips they made to Honduras to provide free dental work to residents in need.

Once their vision was put to paper, the organizing committee created a simple

and straightforward mandate: "To provide free urgent dental care for low income residents of Haliburton County."

Since the clinic opened, Kerr says that the need in the county has been overwhelming.

"The need for the services is at least double what we are able to provide at our current rate of being open 11-13 days per month. Our waiting list continues to grow."

To help them balance the high demand for services, an assistant was recently brought on board.

"It was necessary to hire an assistant to manage the demand because we had more dentists willing to volunteer than dental assistants available to work with them," said Kerr, adding that more volunteer dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants are still needed.

The rest of the health care professionals and support team all volunteer their time to provide the much-needed services, which include root canals, fillings and more.

"The patients are extremely grateful for the care they are receiving," said Kerr.

Fundraising has also been an important aspect in starting the clinic and sustaining its operation. Concerts, silent auctions and a golf tournament held last summer at Blairhampton Golf Club (an event that raised over \$22,000) have all contributed to the cause.

This New Year's Eve, on Saturday, Dec. 31, the organizing committee will host its next fundraiser with a silent auction at Carnarvon Bowl while local band The Ya Babys perform. Tickets for the event are available by calling Mark

Christiano at 705-489-2944 or emailing thehairlounge9@gmail.com. 705-489-2944 or thehairlounge9@gmail.com

Those interested in learning more about the outreach can go to www.dental-outreach.com or calling 705-457-3111.

Residents in need of urgent work are encouraged to call SIRCH at 705-457-1742 ext. 44 to go through an application process.

Donations to the clinic can be made on SIRCH's website at www.sirch.on.ca.