



Napa Dentist Volunteers For Patients In Need CBS Channel 5 KPIX TEXT Report

Jefferson Award Winner: Dr. Adrian Fenderson



Reporting

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NAPA (CBS 5) —



Dr. Adrian Fenderson treats a young patient in Central America

Break a tooth? Dr. Adrian Fenderson's patients know who to call. He's been rooted in Napa Valley for nearly 40 years.

But he's just as well known outside of the office for sinking his teeth into volunteer projects here at home and around the world.

"It's my passion. I love it. You do things that make you feel good," Dr. Fenderson explains.

For nearly three decades, Dr. Fenderson has offered free [dental care](#) during dozens of humanitarian missions to Mexico and Central America, with the Flying Doctors group.

"You get velcro hugs," he says with a smile. "People hug you and don't let go. It's fun. I come back with a glow and warm feeling."

His dental assistant, Laura Hooker, says his personality shines as he serves poor villagers.

"(He's) like a kid himself," she remembers from her trip with him. "It was the most amazing experience. He loves what he does. He's good at it."

Dr. Fenderson says he began volunteering in Vietnam, as an Army dentist in 1971.

"The commander said, 'Would you go out in the villages and do free [dentistry](#)? We're trying to win their hearts and souls.' I said, 'Okay, that sounds good.' So, on weekends we flew in helicopters and landed in the villages and set up and get people out of pain and I found it rewarding."

Since then, he's supplied free dental care from orphanages in India to people in need locally. He's partnered with singer Garth Brooks to raise money for "Smiles for Life."

Dr. Fenderson whitens teeth in exchange for a donation to children's charities. And he fills other community "cavities" by organizing holiday food and toy drives.

And he's launched an essay contest to reward [students](#) who do good deeds. The dentist awarded first prize to Napa High School senior Erica Morales, who raised money for a family in need.

Erica, who's headed to college next year, says she's inspired by Dr. Fenderson's work.

"I want to change someone's life, too," she says.

Dr. Fenderson says it's all about the joy.

"It's not because my Christian background, it's not because I'm philanthropic, it's not because I want to save the world. It's because I love the it makes me feel."

For the warm feelings and smiles he brings, this week's Jefferson Award in the Bay Area goes to Dr. Adrian Fenderson.

Dr. Fenderson arranged a Free Dental Day in Napa in June 2009 and is considering plans for another event in 2010.

Check www.napadentist.com for updates.