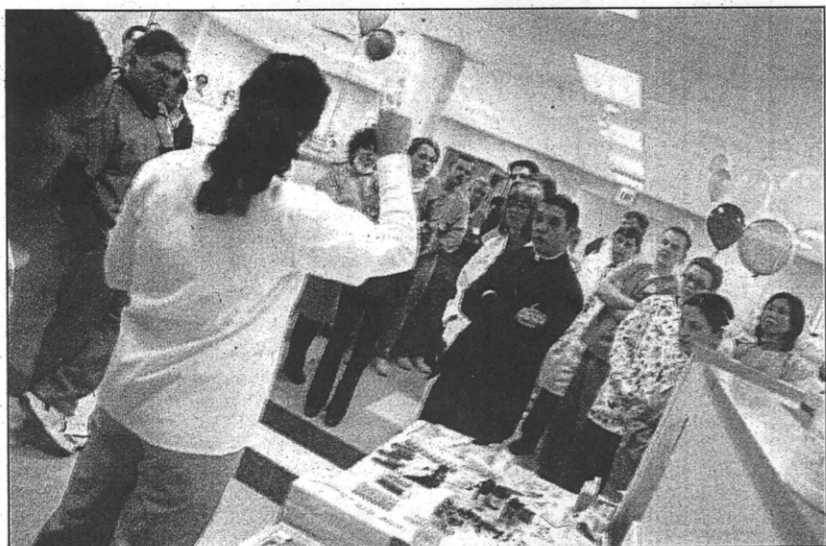


**Dental professionals volunteering for "Give Kids a Smile" day at University of Detroit Mercy, visited by Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Flores, hear instructions before welcoming kids into the offices.**

PHOTOS BY JOE KOHN | THE MICHIGAN CATHOLIC



# Miles of smiles

## Dentists volunteer at UDM clinic event to help underprivileged children

JOE KOHN  
*The Michigan Catholic*

DETROIT — Brighter smiles abounded last Saturday on the campus of University of Detroit Mercy on the city's west side as the annual "Give Kids a Smile" initiative gave dental care to underprivileged children.

The volunteer initiative, which involved dental professionals from the Macomb, Oakland and Detroit Dental Societies, was hosted by the Jesuit school. Many staff members and students from the college helped make the day a success — an undertaking that took many hours of organizing, dental work, and even decorating and making special arrangements for their small-statured visitors.

"It's a fabulous thing for the community, particularly for children who don't have the opportunity to have regular dental appointments," said Donna Robinson, who brought her two children to UDM's dental school on Outer Drive for a cleaning and checkup. "They've done a wonderful job. They've entertained them. They have balloons for them. They've painted their faces. They've given them coloring books and crayons. It was dynamic."

When children first walked into the UDM dental office the morning of Feb. 3, they saw colored pictures of superheroes covering the walls, streamers, balloons — even clowns to paint their faces.

With their spirits lifted, they visited an array of dental professionals to make their smiles even brighter. Indeed, it was a one-stop-shop for the clients, who had their teeth cleaned, cavities filled, and oral surgery done



**Antonio Mauricio, after having his face painted by volunteer clowns, shakes the hand of Bishop Flores.**

where necessary and possible. All in all, hundreds of dentists, oral surgeons, dental assistants and dental students took part.

"We think it's a great cause," said Dr. Irene Tseng, who's practice is in Westland. "We know that there are a lot of kids who don't have access to care. This is an organized way for us to provide some services on a larger scale than we can do at our own offices."

And seeing as that God's talents were at work throughout the day, His blessing were asked upon the dental community before the undertaking. Fr. Oswald Mascarenhas, SJ, and Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Flores presided over the blessing.

"This is a rallying place for reaching out to the youth who can't afford adequate dental care," said Fr. Mascarenhas after the blessing. "We like to be the mediators between talent and the people who need it. We bring them together."

Bishop Flores, receiving a tour of the UDM dental facility, talked with some young clients, several of the professionals volunteering through-



**Seven-year-old Patricia Camarata giggles as volunteer dentist Dr. Rita Fandakly jokes with her while giving her a filling.**

out the day.

"You show great spirit and sense of community to volunteer here," he said to a group in the oral surgery wing.

Those efforts also gave children something to talk about as they met with their parents in the lobby after their dental work was done.

"They counted my teeth," said five-year-old Bryan Carey. "I have, like a million. No — I have 20!"

And, of course, by design some of the children learned the importance of brushing their teeth.

"If you don't brush your teeth, you get cavities," said 5-year-old Toriana Turner.

As pointed out to the volunteers before they went to work, the "Give Kids a Smile" day at UDM contributed to \$1.7 billion worth of care that dental professionals donate to their communities in the United States each year.