

NORTH 100 SHORE



LOCAL LEADERS MAKING
A DIFFERENCE IN OUR FUTURE

2010

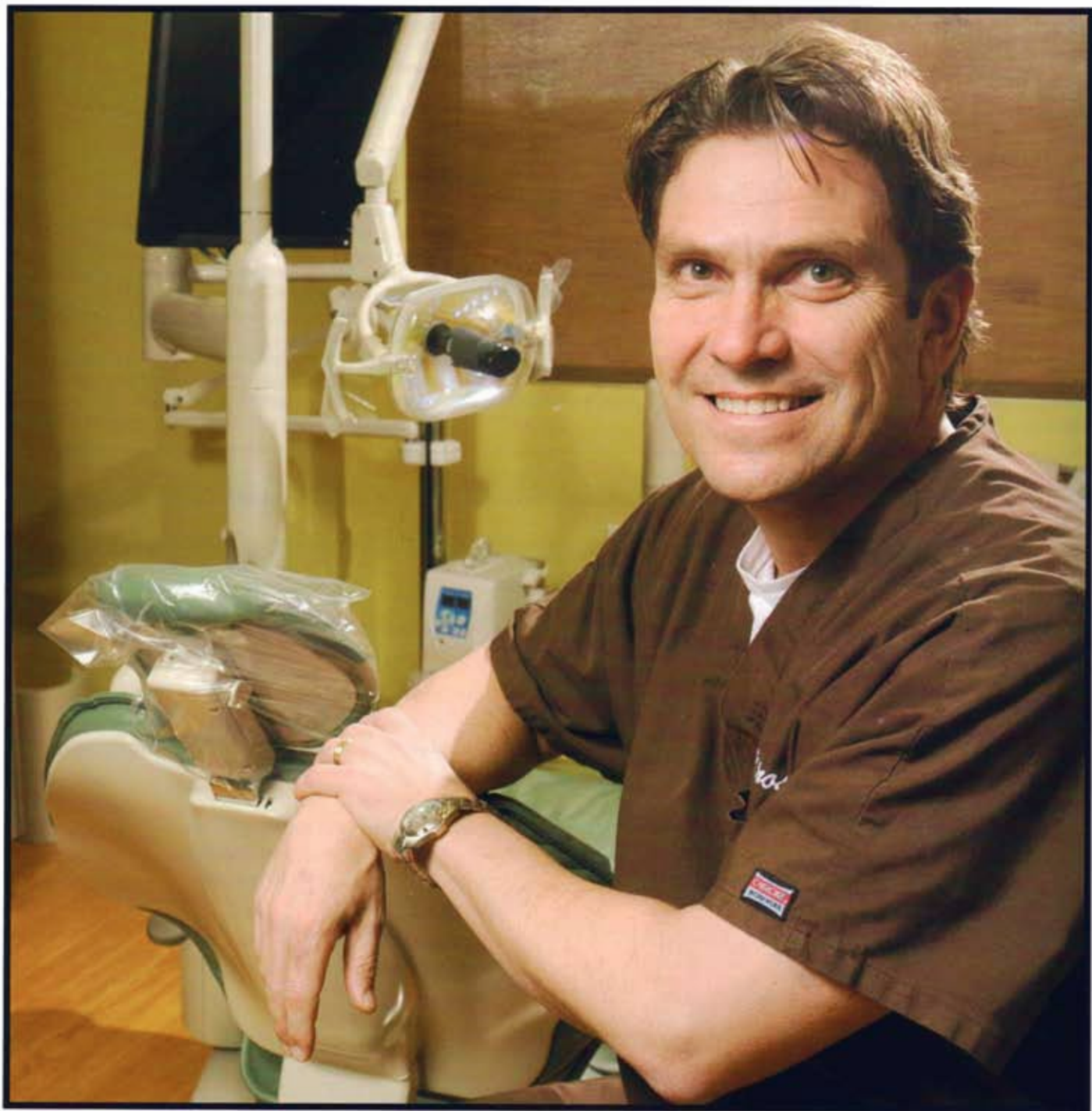


NORTH SHORE 100 PROFILE

DR. FRANK VARINOS

VARINOS DENTAL ASSOCIATES

*Gives free care to hundreds of patients
one hectic day a year*



Frank Varinos has hosted a day of free dental care for the past three years with a program called Dentistry With a Heart.

KEN YUSZKUS PHOTO

It's eight hours of frenetic, intense work, but it's the best eight hours of their year.

Dr. Frank Varinos and nearly 30 volunteers spend one Friday a year giving free dental care to patient after patient until all their teeth and gum worries are remedied. The event is called Dentistry With a Heart, and they've done it three times now.

"The community has been good to me," the Peabody native said. "People think you have to go to exotic places to give back. Sometimes the need is right on your back door."

On Feb. 12, Varinos and his staff at Varinos Dental Associates in Peabody, their family, friends and fellow practitioners spent the day treating 122 patients. The doctor estimated the daylong dental care amounted to \$76,000 worth of cleanings, X-rays, fillings and extractions.

The first two years combined, the crew treated 198 patients for an estimated \$110,000 in dental work.

Varinos said he offers Dentistry With a Heart because there's a need.

"Some people are having a hard time," he said. "We need to try to help these people out."

Every year, a small queue of patients waits outside the office hours before the doors open at 8 a.m., and they keep coming.

"It's hectic; it's straight out," Varinos' office manager Nancy MacDonald said.

She arrives shortly after 5:30 a.m. to ensure every detail is covered. Helping needy patients is satisfying.

"They walk out, and they're relieved that they got these things taken care of," said MacDonald, whose husband also volunteers. "It's very, very rewarding for me to be a part of it."

Varinos, a father of four, started his dental practice in 1989. After they adopted their youngest daughter from China, his wife suggested returning there to provide care.

But Varinos realized many needed care near his practice. He embraced the idea of a day of free dentistry



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Oral surgeon George Hatzigiannis, who volunteers annually

after learning about a similar event in Florida.

"I just thought it was a good idea to bring to the North Shore," Varinos said.

Varinos asks his dental suppliers to donate items, and his church, St. Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church in Peabody, lends folding chairs for the additional patients.

"Everybody kind of pitches in, which is a nice thing," Varinos said.

Oral surgeon George Hatzigiannis, who volunteers every year, said on a typical workday he can see between 20 and 40 patients, but only performs a handful of surgical procedures.

For this year's Dentistry With a

Heart, he performed 90 extractions, 18 from one patient.

"The majority of patients have a mouth that's diseased," Hatzigiannis said. "A lot of these patients literally don't have access to the most basic dentistry. It's not unusual for this to be their first dental encounter in maybe 15 or 20 years."

Hatzigiannis, a medical doctor, said the need is so great they could offer the free care for 48 hours straight and still have patients to treat.

When Varinos asked him to participate, he offered an enthusiastic yes. Hatzigiannis credited Varinos for starting the event.

"I'm obviously a happy participant," Hatzigiannis said. "It's a testament to him to open up his office and say, 'Look, we're going to do it.' It's really a great thing."

He said other dental offices should consider the idea. It's just the right thing to do, Hatzigiannis said.

Varinos said his staff loves to participate despite the taxing day. They must set up, treat patients and break down everything afterward. Some return on Saturday to prepare the instruments for the following week.

At the end of it all, Varinos adds the last nice touch to the day and takes the group to dinner.

"I have a great staff," he said. "I can't say enough things about them for giving their time." 🐾