

## Filipino dentist offers a day of free dental care

Written by Special to the Filipino Reporter  
Saturday, 12 February 2011 11:51

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**Dr. Mariliza LaCap-Tong with a happy patient after treatment.**

BERGENFIELD, N.J. — Dr. Mariliza LaCap-Tong (a Filipina dentist born in Macabebe, Pampanga and raised and educated in the United States), her husband Dr. Darren Tong and their dental team will provide a day of free preventive and emergency dental care for underprivileged children ages 16 and younger as part of the National Children's Dental Health Month.

This will be their sixth year in providing this most needed service.

Last year, they provided more than \$10,000 worth of dentistry to children in the Bergen County area.

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The program, called "Give Kids A Smile," will be held on Feb. 18 (Friday) from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Washington Dental Associates located at 19 Legion Drive in Bergenfield, N.J.

Their office is one of the few offices in the Bergen County area participating in this program.

Last year, more than 48,000 dental team members nationwide participated in "Give kids a Smile."

"It's heartbreaking to see a child's smile destroyed by severe tooth decay," said Dr LaCap.

"Imagine not being able to eat, sleep or pay attention in school because you have a mouthful of toothaches. It's tragic. Our state needs to do more to help children get the dental care they need."

Nearly 1 in 4 children, aged 2 to 11 years old have untreated cavities in their baby teeth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While poor diet and oral hygiene certainly play a role, cavities are actually caused by a disease called caries, which is five times more common than asthma.

The National Institutes of Health report that 80 percent of tooth decay is found in just 25 percent of children, primarily from low-income families.

Public health programs such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) are supposed to help undeserved children, but utilization rates are low.

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“With ‘Give Kids A Smile,’ we can help some children get the dental care they need, but a one-day event will never be enough. Our event is not a cure all, it’s a wake up call. Charity is not a health care system,” said Dr. LaCap.

“Giving back to the community that has supported our office is also important to us,” says Dr. Tong.

“This program will touch the lives of so many of New Jersey’s children who need oral healthcare and instruction. I am proud to be a part of it.”

“Our focus this year is the Filipino community. We are hoping to serve children whose parents cannot afford to provide dental health care,” said Dr. LaCap, a Columbia University alumnus who has been practicing dentistry for over 19 years with her husband Dr. Tong.

Qualified children (children with NJ Care card, Medicaid or whose parent’s combined income is less than \$40,000) should call and make an appointment.

Their office plans to see at least 60 children.

“These appointments fill up quickly. We usually have to turn people away,” says Larni, the front office manager.

The children will receive a comprehensive dental exam, any emergency treatment, oral healthcare instruction, fluoride treatment and free dental hygiene material, including toothbrush, toothpaste and floss.

If your children or any children you know qualifies for this program, please call their office at 201.384.2425 and mention the “Give Kids a Smile” program.

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They are also looking for more dental assistants or hygienists to volunteer their time on this special day of giving.

Please give them a call or visit their website at [www.WashingtonDentalNJ.com](http://www.WashingtonDentalNJ.com) and click on "Giving back to the Community."