

## feature



Dr. Jason Bartsch and his wife Amy are both going to Peru.

# Local couple putting “Kindness in Action”

## Program designed to provide free dentistry to people who have no access at all

By Warren Frey  
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A local dentist is going south to help out the less fortunate. But he's not crossing one border; he's crossing the equator.

Dr. Jason Bartsch runs the Sun Valley Dental Centre here in Osoyoos. But in March he'll be heading to Peru, along with several other dentists and specialists, to help isolated villagers.

“We'll be providing free dentistry to those who can't afford dental care, and who may not even be aware of the importance of dental hygiene,” he said.

Bartsch is involved with a group called Kindness in Action, a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to bringing dental assistance to the poor corners of the world. Kindness in Action started eight years ago with an expedition to Guatemala, and now covers eight countries in Latin and South America.

But the trip to Peru is a first for Dr. Bartsch, at least in terms of distance.

“I did volunteer work at an emergency clinic on the Downtown Eastside during dentistry school and for some time afterward, but this is my first trip out of the country for volunteer work. It's something I've always wanted to do; I believe one of the reasons I'm here is to provide for those who

don't have access to the skills I can provide,” he said.

He said he wasn't sure what to expect for his trip, but he does know there's a need for his talents and those of his fellow dentists in isolated communities in Peru.

Four dentists, three dental hygienists and 10 to 12 certified dental assistants and support staff will all be setting up camp in the villages of Urubambu, Piesa and Cauthou.

“People tend to come from miles and miles away for the clinic,” he said.

He added the clinic will see roughly 100 patients a day, with a triage station prioritizing patients based on need and sending them to the appropriate station for treatment. The dentists will switch up their duties throughout the length of the clinic.

“We'll be working from dawn to dusk, with flashlights and gauze,” he said.

He added there isn't any electricity in the areas the group will be working, so they'll be operating for the most part in daylight.

“I wish I could do this sort of thing more often, though I enjoy the dentistry I get to do here as well,” he said.

He added he would have to close his practice for the week he leaves for Peru, in addition to partially funding the trip himself. He also praised the local and Peruvian Rotary Clubs, which will also sponsor the trip.

“I can't say enough good things about the Rotary Club, they've been terrific,” he said.

Dr. Bartsch's wife Amy, who is currently training as a dental assistant, will also be lending her skills in Peru.