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## Palo Alto Online News

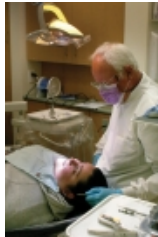
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### State-of-the art dental clinics open in East Palo Alto

*First of its kind for the underserved communities of East Palo Alto, East Menlo Park and southern part of Redwood City*

by Sue Dremann  
Palo Alto Online Staff

Photos



A state-of-the art dental clinic and health-education center opened Thursday in East Palo Alto, providing the first such clinics to residents in the city.



A dual celebration by the Ravenswood Family Health Center was held Thursday for the opening of the Center for Health Promotion and its Ravenswood Family Dentistry Clinic.

Ravenswood has long served East Palo Alto and East Menlo Park residents, providing crucial family medical care to a population that would otherwise not have coverage.



The center has focused on preventive care and health education, including nutrition and access to fresh, healthy foods. Lack of dental care has been a major concern, according to clinic officials.

"Our patients have significant dental health problems. The extent of the problem was confirmed when our staff screened Ravenswood City School District kindergartners and second-graders several years ago and found that 32 percent had visible dental cavities," said Ravenswood CEO Luisa Buada.



An estimated 40 percent of adults in East Palo Alto and Belle Haven in Menlo Park need immediate access to oral-health services, particularly those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, said Kathleen Alexander, director of communications for Ravenswood Family Health Center.

According to U.S. Health and Human Services Administration criteria, the Ravenswood Family Health Center serves a "Dental Professional Shortage Area," which means the ratio of low-income population to dentists is greater than 3,000 to 1.

In Ravenswood's service area, the ratio is actually "a stunning 81,521 to 1," according to Alexander.

The dental clinic is a full-service facility with 10 dental chairs, a pediatric unit, a surgery

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The Almanac

- First Place
- Feature Photo

Second Place  
General Excellence

Mountain View Voice

- Second Place
- Public Service

unit and advanced digital dental technology.

Five displays for child-appropriate video games provide diversion when kids feel anxious about going to the dentist, Alexander noted.

Dental Director Jack Luomanen, who has set up many community dentistry clinics in the past 30 years, is focusing on early detection and prevention into the dental program, including a method designed at UCSF to detect bacterial conditions found in the mouths of young children under the age of 3.

The dentists can treat the disease preemptively and reduce or limit future cavities, Alexander said.

Buada sought and received a \$1.5 million grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

"With additional funding from the Bothin Foundation, Baxter International, California Dental Association and others, RFHC has been able to build a first class dental clinic that rivals the best in the county," Alexander said.

Given limited staffing, the new dental clinic will only be able to accept its registered medical patients.

The clinic expects to see 1,800 patients in 4,500 visits, expanding to 3,000 patients in 8,500 visits in two years. At full capacity, the clinic will be able to see 6,000 to 8,000 unique patients annually, she said.

The dental clinic is one of two new facilities to serve residents. The 4,000-square-foot Center for Health Promotion, the second center, addresses preventive health through a health-education team and has a classroom and space for retinopathy screening.

Stanford Hospital and Clinics has opened a health-library extension at the center, making it the fifth in its network of health libraries.

With the assistance of a bilingual librarian, people will have access to one of the most extensive online bilingual health-information systems in the region, Alexander said.

Insurance-enrollment specialists also meet with families to determine eligibility for public health coverage. A video display presents educational videos.

Venture capitalist Gordon Russell, a Portola Valley resident and Ravenswood board member, is largely responsible for the creation of the health-education center.

Hearing that the education and insurance enrollment staff were packed into a "warren" of cubicles, Russell proposed building a new site. He committed a major gift to underwrite the lion's share for internal construction of the building.

Russell was awarded an Avenidas "Lifetimes of Achievement" award on Thursday (April 29) for his ongoing work and support of Ravenswood Family Health Center.

For more information about the Ravenswood Family Health Center, go to [www.ravenswoodfhc.org](http://www.ravenswoodfhc.org).

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