



Doctors inspired to volunteer at Hillcrest clinic



Left to right: Laser technician Steve Harris, Dr. Harold "Hal" Boyd, Dr. Michael Wicks, Dr. Carolyn Hale and Dr. J. Mark Roberts.

By CJ Drake, OYA Communications
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Inspired by recent media coverage, six new medical professionals have volunteered to help remove tattoos from at-risk youth at the Hillcrest YCF clinic. Three of the professionals – all retired medical doctors from Marion County – were at Hillcrest Friday for training to remove tattoos with a laser.

The doctors say they volunteered after recently reading a profile of Dr. Carolyn Hale in "[For Your Health](#)," a health care magazine published by the Salem Statesman Journal. Dr. Hale is a dermatologist in Keizer who started the tattoo-removal clinic at Hillcrest with a former medical colleague. Youth from various OYA facilities who want tattoos removed visit the Hillcrest clinic. Dr. Hale uses a medical laser she donated to the clinic to remove the tattoos. Until now, she was the only one qualified to use it, which limited the clinic's operation to one Friday a month.

"We currently have a backlog and if we could do this once a week or even every other week instead of once a month that will really speed

things up," said Dr. Hale during a break in treatments at the clinic, where six youth were waiting to have tattoos removed.

"I think it's very much a physician's duty to take care of those who aren't in a position to take care of themselves," said Dr. Harold "Hal" Boyd, a retired orthopedic surgeon who also volunteers to help the homeless. "I like the idea of giving young people a second chance."

After reading the profile of Dr. Hale, removing tattoos from at-risk youth "just struck me as an underserved area and I felt moved to volunteer," said Dr. Michael Wicks, a retired family physician from Silverton. "It will help kids in a unique way to get a fresh start. I'd like to see them have a chance to start over."

As they waited in the hall outside the treatment room, several youth said they wanted their tattoos removed so they could get a fresh start in life. One youth wanted to join the military after OYA, but was told to get his tattoos removed first. Another youth, whose left arm was tattooed by his uncle and his right arm by a tattoo artist, was about to be paroled from OYA and thought that the markings would hinder him from finding a job.

Almost all youth interviewed at the Oct. 24 clinic said they were under the influence of drugs, alcohol, peer pressure or all three when they were tattooed.

Steve Harris, a registered nurse and nationally recognized expert on medical lasers, traveled from Alabama to Salem last week to instruct the new volunteers on how to remove tattoos. Since nobody needs a license or even professional training to ink a tattoo, there is no consistency to the expertise and materials used in their application, and that complicates their removal.

Harris spent several hours explaining the laser's operation to the three doctors before they went to the clinic to see their first patient. Only licensed medical professionals are allowed to use the laser, which gradually breaks down the tattoo ink in the skin.

Griselda Solano Salinas with the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations (OIIR) coordinates the tattoo-removal clinic at Hillcrest. She was aided Friday by Rolando Ramirez, also with OIIR. Almost all youth who seek tattoo removal must undergo several laser treatments before the ink starts to fade, and keeping track of them and their documentation is the responsibility of Salinas. After each treatment, the skin subjected to the laser is bandaged by volunteer nurse Jan Verser. Most youth say they feel a mild stinging during and immediately after the treatment.

“I want to acknowledge Griselda’s relational leadership skills as the glue that brought all the people and elements together,” said Maria Chavez-Haroldson, OIIR director. “She truly is dedicated to helping our youth get a second chance.”

OYA thanks our new volunteers (in alphabetical order):

- Harold “Hal” Boyd, M.D.
- Sandra Cradit, R.N.
- Curt Hawkinson, physician assistant-certified
- J. Mark Roberts, M.D.
- Malcolm Snider, M.D.
- Michael Wicks, M.D.



Griselda Solano Salinas (center) with the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations discusses tattoo removal with Dr. J. Mark Roberts (right) and technician Steve Harris.



Dr. Carolyn Hale (left) discusses laser techniques with Steve Harris, who traveled to Oregon from Alabama to instruct the new volunteer doctors on how to remove tattoos. Harris is a national expert on medical lasers.



Nurse Jan Verser bandages the finger of a youth who underwent his second treatment Oct. 24 to remove several small tattoos from his hands. Four more treatments will be needed to remove the tattoos.