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Local church helps with dental needs

— Central Baptist Church’s Celebrate Recovery program recently helped nearly 30 people who needed dental services. The church hosted the BMDF Mobile Healthcare unit for two days of oral surgery last month.

A total of 28 people were treated during the two-day event, with patients also coming from the Gospel Rescue Mission, the church congregants, Celebrate Recovery and Bridges Out of Poverty. Some patients had up to seven teeth removed during their appointment. Dr. Edwin Henslee, an oral surgeon from Midwest City, volunteered both days and was assisted by dental hygienist Diana Bunch of Oktaha and dental assistants Judy Jones of Oklahoma City and Britani Hearlson of Muskogee.

The city of Muskogee began a program to impact area residents who are in poverty. The need for dental care was identified as one of the major issues facing many of the individuals with whom they were working, according to a media release.

The Rev. J.T. Carvel at Central Baptist had knowledge of the mobile dental unit operating in Oklahoma through the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship. He contacted Bill Sisson, director of the Mobile Healthcare Ministry, and began the process of getting the unit brought to Muskogee. A community grant was applied for to cover expenses for the first year. The initial pilot event was funded by the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma Community Ministries department.

Muskogee has several nonprofit organizations which assist people to overcome their status of “poverty.” One is located at Central Baptist, which hosts one of eight Celebrate Recovery chapters in Muskogee using a curriculum designed to help people overcome problems and habits. Another organization is Bridges Out of Poverty, a five-month series of workshops. Upon completion of the course, enrollees are assigned a volunteer partner to mentor and assist them. Central also has a Christian Women’s Job Corps program. Help for those needing prescription glasses will be available later this year through a free vision clinic program, according to the release.

The goal of conducting the clinics for underserved persons in the Muskogee area is to enable them to look presentable enough for a job interview and obtain employment, thereby improving their quality of life, the release states. The clinic sessions also provide the means to reach clients with spiritual care and an invitation to visit Central Baptist Church for obtaining a church family relationship.

The Mobile Healthcare Unit is available to churches in Oklahoma. Anyone interested in hosting the mobile unit or volunteering to assist with the ministry can contact Sisson at (405) 246-5540 or bills@bmdf.org.