

# Donated dental skills in North Las Vegas benefit youths



Dr. Victoria Chen of Significance Orthodontics works on braces for Juan Lezama, 16, in her North Las Vegas office Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2018. Chen and her team will be donating orthodontic care to local children through the national



By **Briana Erickson** / Las Vegas Review-Journal

August 8, 2018 - 2:30 pm

Fourteen-year-old Alondra Lezama sat in a chair at Significance Orthodontics on Tuesday, ready to get her braces off after wearing them a little over a year.

“She’s one of the fast ones,” orthodontist Victoria Chen said as she checked out the patient. “Congratulations, sweetie.”

Alondra’s brother Juan, 16, sat in the patient room next to her, fresh metal in his mouth.

Chen hopes to be able to put braces on even more kids now, after donating more than \$120,000 worth of her services through Smiles Change Lives — a national nonprofit aimed at helping children from struggling families afford necessary orthodontic treatment.

And from 3-7 p.m. on Aug. 17, she will hold an open house at her office at 2777 W. Craig Road in North Las Vegas. Registration for the event is open to qualifying children and their families.

“It’s not about the braces,” Chen said. “It’s about bringing a child a smile and self-esteem. It’s the most valuable gift we can give to our children.”

To qualify for the program, a child must be between the ages of 7 and 21, have good oral hygiene, not be wearing braces currently, have a moderate to severe need for braces and meet certain financial guidelines. For example, a family of four must have a household income of less than \$73,800.

Families are encouraged to attend the open house and bring their child, a copy of their 2017 tax return (listing their child as a dependent) and a \$30 application fee.

Chen joins two other valley orthodontists who offer their services to low-income families. The others are Blaine Hansen and R. Matthew Wirig.

The first doctor in the valley signed up in 2012, and about 20 kids have been treated here since then, said Janell Pallanich, vice president and legal counsel of Smiles Change Lives. The nonprofit was founded in 1997 by Virginia Brown, who grew up during the Great Depression and was bullied after her parents could only afford to pay for orthodontic treatment for her sister.