

Volunteer

WINNER

Dr. Robert B. Ettleman,
Gulf Coast Dental Outreach Inc.

Ettleman and his wife, Janet Ettleman, founded Gulf Coast Dental Outreach, a charitable organization, in the fall of 2007. The organization creates access to dental treatment for underserved, low-income adult patients. Prior to entering private practice, he was a volunteer dentist in Hadera, Israel, where he established a kibbutz-based preventative dental program.



COURTESY OF DR. ROBERT B. ETTLEMAN

Volunteer Dentist Hugh Wunderlich, left, and Dr. Robert B. Ettleman with a patient

What do you like most about your job? I founded Gulf Coast Dental Outreach shortly after my diagnosis of Parkinson's disease made it impossible for me to practice clinical dentistry. With the establishment of Gulf Coast Dental Outreach, I was able to utilize my managerial skills in running the clinic and still keep my connection with dentistry.

I have often said, "I practice dentistry through the hands of others." I enjoy coming into the clinic and meeting our patients and interacting with our volunteer professionals, and it feels great to know that I've been able to help make a difference in so many people's lives.

Who is your hero? Although Michael J. Fox is not a health care provider, he is

a health care hero to me. His establishment, The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, has funded nearly \$196 million for Parkinson's research. Fox has greatly expanded the public awareness of Parkinson's disease. The foundations board and scientists have broken down barriers so that international collaboration of research can be facilitated, new ideas are funded and research is accelerated.

If he can go from actor to advocate, I, too, can become inspired to alter my path. **Tell us something unique about yourself many people don't know:** I was a bass guitarist in a '50s-style rock band a very long time ago.

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