

Neighbors

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More than just a pretty face

By Carey M. Wilson
Neighbors

A strange, almost reflective look crossed Dr. Mark Chin's face as he remembered a phone call he received two years ago with the news a garage door had shut on his 2-year-old daughter's fingers.

The situation was terrifyingly ironic. All he could imagine were her fingers cut off and then medically reattached -- a standard procedure in his plastic surgery practice.

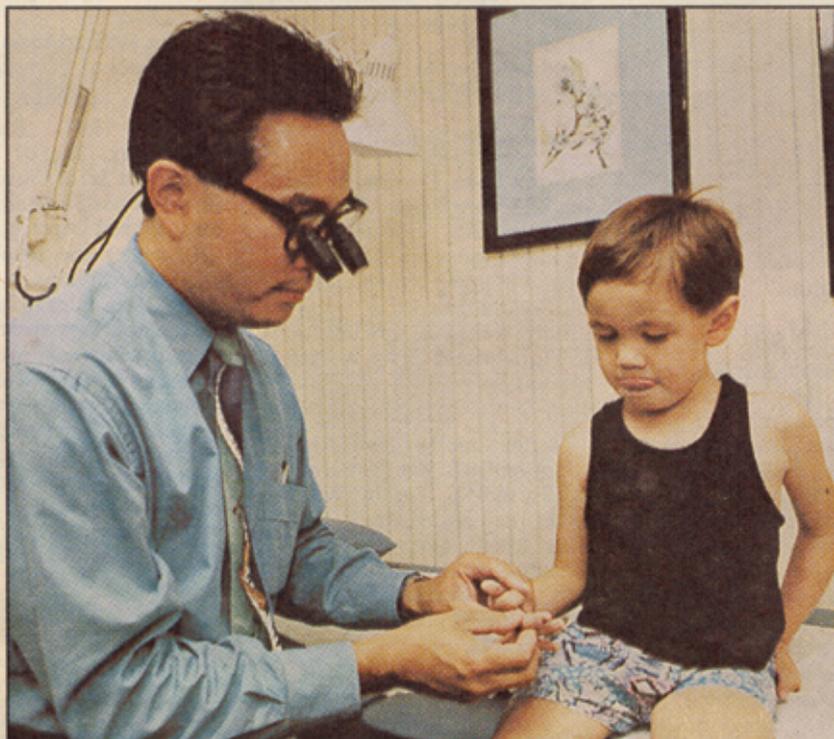
Luckily, in his daughter's case, there were only minor cuts, but for 3-year-old Kenny Wong-Potter, a trip down a backyard slide didn't end as harmlessly.

"He came inside screaming," said his mother, Karen Wong. "He said his finger fell off. I looked down and saw blood all over his shirt and I knew something was wrong."

A month after the accident, the little dark-haired boy who lives in northwest Fresno sat quietly during an exam of his re-attached middle finger. Occasionally, the normally talkative boy stuck out his bottom lip, pouting and stubbornly refusing to answer the doctor's questions.



Chin checks slides that recorded progress in the healing process that included the use of leeches.



Photos by Zia Nizami - Neighbors

Above, Dr. Mark Chin checks Kenny Wong-Potter's finger after it was severed in a playground accident. Below, the reattached finger is healing well.

After about 10 minutes, he tired of pouting and began to show his ornery side, sticking his tongue out at the doctor performing the exam. Chin responded by sticking his tongue out and uttering a sing-song like "na-na-na." Startled, Kenny began to laugh and the exam continued.

Chin, a northeast Fresno plastic surgeon whose practice includes cosmetic as well as reconstructive surgery, said moments like that make the many years he spent in school worth it.

"The 2- and 3-year-olds are the most challenging," he said, "but this is where it all pays off. If I can make a patient like Kenny laugh and at the same time help him, it feels good."

Kenny's accident happened July 18, as his mother was drawing him and his sister an evening bath. The two children were playing on their backyard slide as they had done a hundred times before, except this time, a plastic part had come off, exposing the sharp metal that cut Kenny's finger.

Wong called 911 and was given instructions to find the finger, pack it in cotton and keep it on ice.

"I was so naive," Wong said. "Kenny asked me what was going to happen when the ambulance came. I told him we were going to go to the hospital and the doctor

would put his finger on and then we would come back home. I didn't know how complicated the whole thing was."



The surgery began around 1 a.m. and lasted more than five hours. Kenny returned home from the Valley Children's Hospital intensive care unit two weeks later.

"Most people think it is just taking the finger and sewing up the skin," Chin said, "but it is more than that. You don't just reattach the part. You want to make it functional again."

That meant reattaching bone, nerves,

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20 FUSD schools get new principals

By Carey M. Wilson
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Retirements, transfers and assignment changes at the end of the last school year will mean 20 new principals at Fresno Unified schools.

In northeast Fresno, schools affected by the change are Vinland and Wishon elementary schools and Ahwahnee and Scandinavian middle schools.

In northwest Fresno, schools affected by the change are Kratt, Slater and Wilson elementary schools and Bullard Project Talent, Cooper, Ft. Miller, Lawless and Tenaya middle schools.

In south Fresno, schools affected by the change are Calwa, Jackson, Kirk, Rowell and Turner elementary schools and Carver, Kings Canyon and Yosemite middle schools.

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'Wee Wheezers' focus of asthma workshop

By Carey M. Wilson
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On a cold, gray day, Janice Tarango bundled up, braved the steady drizzle and thick fog and went to watch her 7-year-old son play soccer.

He had complained of a stuffy nose a few hours earlier, but was playing like a champion until she saw him stop, clutch his chest and collapse.

Her son, like approximately 12.4 million people around the nation, was diagnosed with asthma, a chronic lung condition characterized by coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

"I was scared and afraid and didn't know what to do," said the northeast Fresno resident. "I didn't have enough information to explain to him what was happening."

As a result, Tarango enrolled in a class offered by the Fresno Asthma Project, a consortium organized because Fresno is one of three areas in the nation with the highest rate of asthma-related deaths.

The next three-week class, called Wee Wheezers, starts Sept. 5 at the Valley Children's Hospital Professional Center in northeast Fresno.

"The class really opened my eyes," Tarango said, "It laid all the information out and said this is what to do and this is what not to do."

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