

# Manteca Bulletin

Serving the Crossroads of California since 1908 • Vol. 94 No. 167  
Day, June 16, 2002 **A3**

## HEALTH

# Surgeon is artist at heart

By **BRANDON BOWERS**

Staff reporter of the  
MANTECA (CALIF.) BULLETIN

Dr. Robert Gray is an artist at heart. He appreciates the beauty of the human body, and like an artist, has a palette of materials to choose from for his work.

But he can't get too creative. As a facial plastic surgeon, he must have a steady hand and a clear vision how his patients will look when they come out of surgery. A wrong move could mean additional doctor's visits and surgeries.

Gray is the area's only plastic surgeon certified by two medical boards for work in both facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. That means patients come from as far as the Bay Area and Sacramento seeking his services.

Gray specializes in mixed media. He uses a variety of materials to achieve his vision. One material is Gore-Tex, the same stuff used in weatherproof clothing.

Gore-Tex has been used for medical purposes for about 20 years. It has been used to patch holes in hearts and blood vessels, but has caught on with plastic surgeons in recent years for use as an implant material.

The spongy feel of Gore-Tex is a good replacement for cartilage in the nose. That's why it is often used in operations to make noses and chins bigger.

He also uses collagen, a tem-

## HEALTH

FROM PAGE A1

porary filler material used for lip implants. Lips can also be made fuller by inserting skin tissue from cadavers, often the best option because actual human tissue won't be rejected by the body like some foreign materials.

Collagen and tissue are temporary. In fact, with collagen, patients must make return trips to retain the full-lip effect.

Implants like Gore-Tex and rubber and plastic products provide a permanent look.

"The nice thing about implants is if you don't like them, you can take them out," he said.

Gray's office also performs Botox injections to help get rid of wrinkles in the face. Botox, a derivative of the botulism toxin, relaxes wrinkles in the forehead by mildly paralyzing some of the facial muscles. Botox injections are given every few months and consist of a shot to the forehead.

The injections have been a hit with people over 40 years old, Gray said.

"I've got a 70-year-old that has a 20-year-old's forehead," he said.

Gray's patients include people who want to improve their looks, but also people who need reconstructive surgery after a vehicle accident or facial surgery. Some patients include people who have had tumors removed from their face, leaving a noticeable scar.

"I don't like seeing people walking around with problems I know I can fix," he said.

Many plastic surgery procedures are not covered by medical insurance, but cost is rarely a deterrent for people who have struggled with a facial feature they aren't happy with their whole lives.

"Typically, people who didn't like their nose their whole youth get the money together to get it fixed," Gray said.

Usually, such operations are performed at university hospitals. Gray, a Stockton resident, operates out of Doctor's Hospital of Manteca and conducts office visits at the two-story medical office building at the intersection of Cottage Avenue and Pine Street.

See **HEALTH** page A3