

Victim of racial attack will get new teeth

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By Mike Dougherty

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Abdulkadir Ali might just smile.

Ali, 22, who was attacked 10 years ago by a gang of young men wielding baseball bats, suffered facial damage and lost 10 permanent teeth in the attack. Last month, he learned that the Rochester Area Foundation has maintained a fund of donations to help pay for his medical costs.

"I knew something would happen," Ali said this week. "God opens doors, you know? And here it is."

Steve Thornton, executive director of the Rochester Area Foundation, said the fund was established a short time after the attack and was part of then Rochester Mayor Chuck Canfield's peace initiative. The fund has about \$6,500 in it, Thornton said. Canfield helped established the "Not in Our Town" campaign to combat racism in the wake of the attack on Ali and several other Somalis in 1996.

Three men were sentenced to varying prison sentences for the attack on Ali, who was 12 at the time.

Heather Christians, Ali's victim's services advocate in Rochester, said the Minnesota Reparations Board is willing to step in for expenses beyond what's in the fund.

"Abdul was or is seeing someone who said to wait until he stopped growing before they could replace his teeth, and now is the time," Christians said. "Between the Rochester Area Foundation fund and the crime reparations board, it should be taken care of."

She has been working with Ali and Mayo Clinic to arrange an evaluation, which would be the first step in getting the teeth replaced.

"He wants to get it done, so it's just a matter of time," Christians said. "Once we can get this ironed out, he will be able to see someone who can figure out what exactly needs to be done."

Ali, who's waited for 10 years, told the Post-Bulletin last month that he's been self conscious about his smile and that the loss of so many teeth affected his ability to eat.

"I'm very excited about it," Ali said. "I won't have to walk around with an empty mouth. I'm just waiting around. We have to go through the paperwork, then I'll know more about it."