

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Dental Clinics

Dental care is difficult to access for patients that do not have insurance or for those that rely on the Medicaid program. Knowing that dental health is integral to a person's overall health, Wisconsin hospitals have been instrumental in helping patients gain access to dental care by establishing or supporting a local dental clinic that serves patients with few resources.

Hosting CareMobile gives our kids healthy mouths



From the day the dental bus arrived in the Upland Hills Health parking lot this April, until it left a few weeks later, over 60 children received dental treatments.

Many children in Iowa County and surrounding counties are without dental insurance, making a yearly dentist visit out of reach for their parents. Upland Hills Health once again partnered with the Iowa County Health Department to bring the Ronald McDonald CareMobile to Dodgeville.

The CareMobile treats children under 18 whose families qualify, with routine cleanings, as well as more complicated dental issues, at no cost. The need is so great that many times families will receive a first treatment at the Upland Hills Health location, but need to follow the bus to its next stop due to a full schedule. This need triggered the bus to stay at its Upland Hills Health location for six weeks, longer than the normal two week period.

Upland Hills Health has been part of the CareMobile program for the last four years.

Upland Hills Health, Dodgeville

Solving children's dental problems at Ministry Dental Center

Ministry Dental Center, a partnership of CAP Services, Delta Dental Plan of Wisconsin and Saint Michael's Hospital, serves families with Medicaid coverage.

Several years ago, Karl S. Pnazek and his wife established an acorn fund at the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin to provide dental services to low-income children not eligible for BadgerCare. The idea was to supplement the services offered at Ministry Dental Center that were limited to Medicaid recipients.

An acorn fund is designed to grow over the years and, when fully endowed, to distribute its earnings for the purpose for which it was organized. CAP Services, a nonprofit agency that helps low-income families in central Wisconsin, is the fund representative with input from Delta Dental and Ministry Dental.

In December 2008, Terry Rothman of the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin reached out to Karl. The Community Foundation administers the Tooth Fairy Fund, which pays for dental emergencies not covered by Medicaid. A local grade school nurse had contacted Terry to inquire about obtaining dental services for a six-year-old first grader at Madison School in Stevens Point. The parents had lost their BadgerCare eligibility because they both found jobs and their employer did not offer dental insurance. The six-year-old had been taking Tylenol all weekend and had already taken two more that morning for pain. His teacher called the school nurse to see what she could do.

Working with Brenda Diamond at Ministry Dental Center (where the child had previously received services when the family was on BadgerCare), he was given an emergency appointment that afternoon. It turned out that the tooth was abscessed and the patient had significant facial swelling. Pulling the tooth relieved the pain almost immediately.

While at Ministry Dental Center, Dr. London Cooper also assessed the child's oral health and noted that a tooth needed a filling. She addressed that problem, completing a cleaning and a fluoride application. By 4:00 p.m., the problem was resolved. The Tooth Fairy Fund reimbursed Ministry Dental for its costs.

Ministry Health Care – Saint Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

She's smiling—honestly!



"I have nothing but praise for the people at the Madre Angela Dental Clinic (MADC). They completely reconstructed my mouth, from top to bottom. The quality of their work was better than it would have been if I had paid a fortune for it."

Those are the words of Nancy Bissett, a middle-aged woman who lives in Cudahy, Wisconsin. Nancy had fallen, a "freak accident" she calls it because when she fell, she broke her cheek bones, the orbit of her eye and all of her front teeth. Unemployed and job-seeking at the time, she had no money to pay for the urgent care dentistry she needed. Seeing her reflection in the mirror, she reasoned, "Who would hire me?" She fell into depression.

"Ordinarily, I'm an outgoing person," says Nancy, "but I was traumatized. I was so ashamed that I always covered my mouth with my hand when I talked, and I regressed so much that I hated to go out, even to the grocery store." Then Nancy, who had moved to Cudahy from Des Moines, Iowa, remembered the upcoming family reunion. Her family would see her disfigurement. She was devastated—until she learned about MADC.

Nancy's care at MADC was extensive, beginning with urgent care and continuing with restorative treatment. It spanned more than a year, with appointments occurring at least once, often twice, a week. "The staff was so understanding, so supportive," she recalls. "They would always build me up for the next step by saying things like 'You're doing great, Nancy.' 'You're half way through, Nancy....'" The staff was "respectful," "gentle" and "thoughtful," and "Someone even got me some Vaseline because 'my lips would get extremely dry during long procedures.'"

Today, with 12 new teeth, a reconstructed jawbone and "more other kinds of dental work than you can imagine," Nancy smiles readily. "I have a beautiful smile," she boasts, "and I smile a lot. I have a job, too. Actually, I have an interview scheduled for an even better job. I'm grateful to the staff at Madre Angela. They'll always be in my heart."

Then, almost as a P.S., she adds, "I know this all seems unbelievable, but I want you to know it's true. My maiden name is Lincoln. I'm a seventh cousin to Abe. It's in our family to be honest."

"By the way, I'm really looking forward to that family reunion."

Columbia St. Mary's, Inc., Milwaukee

Free community dental care

Health care professionals are often asked what inspired them to go into the medical field. A common response is, "I like to help people." Health care is a profession that affects the personal lives of so many people on a daily basis, and the highs outweigh the lows when someone's life has been extended or improved by the caring hands of a health care provider.

Throughout small communities in Jefferson County, impoverished or underinsured families are cared for with the skilled hands of experienced physicians and dental professionals. The Community Dental Clinic in Fort Atkinson came to life by the generous contributions of many, including Delta Dental of Wisconsin, United Way of Jefferson and North Walworth Counties, Rock River Free Clinic, Fort Memorial Hospital, Wisconsin Dental Association, the Kohl Foundation, the State of Wisconsin grant program, Holt Dental Company and private donations.

The number of patients served by the free dental clinic has almost doubled since the program began in 2007. Numerous area dentists and hygienists donate their time to provide patients with standard evaluations and exams, x-rays, cleanings for adults and children three years and older, fluoride treatments, sealants, fillings, extractions, smoking cessation information, and oral health and dietary counseling.

Barbara Gudgeon, clinic coordinator, states, "We have a great working relationship with Fort HealthCare, and there are many people that made this service possible, including Paul Hable, director of safety and lab at Fort HealthCare, Gail Scott and Barb Dehnert from the Jefferson County Health Department, Debra Gatzke, Dan McCrea from United Way, dentists Juliet Slavens and Brian Turley and others were instrumental in turning the idea of the clinic into a reality. Fort HealthCare gives us technical support, lab services by testing our biopsies, and by promoting and supporting the dental clinic in any way they can. Fort HealthCare rents a 1200 sq. ft. medical office suite to the clinic for one dollar per year."

"I am just very impressed with Fort HealthCare and their commitment to the area communities. The clinic has such wonderful volunteers and staff and everyone gives 150 percent of their time and energy without a second thought. I feel very honored to be a part of this incredible team," said Gudgeon.

Sixteen dentists volunteer for this service: Turley, Slavens, Dr. Jeff Winn, Dr. Bob Karczewski, Dr. Pete Nysather, Dr. Virgil Simley, Dr. David Meade, Dr. Michael Bender, Dr. Thomas Gobel, Dr. Dan Harvey, Dr. Lowell Lakritz, Dr. Thomas Bitner, Dr. David Belardi, Dr. Joseph Guros, Dr. Steve Fahsel, and Dr. Leslie Showalter. Additionally, two assistants and four hygienists volunteer their time, and four patients have come back after their treatment was completed to volunteer.

Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Fox Cities Community Health Center

As the economic recession continues, more and more people look for advice on how to get health care and find affordable medication. One outlet for people to go to during these difficult times has been the Fox Cities Community Health Center, which Affinity Health System and ThedaCare help to fund, along with federal dollars and donations.

The Fox Cities Community Health Center began in 1996 and hired its first full-time physician in 2007. It targets the uninsured or underinsured, with fees calculated on a sliding scale according to income. It currently has two full-time doctors on staff.

As Wisconsin residents' needs have changed throughout the recession, the Fox Cities Community Health Center has responded to meet these needs. In January 2009, as a reaction to a community needs assessment, dental care was added.

"Adding a dental service is another step toward the Fox Cities Community Health Center's goal of becoming a single location where patients can receive all of their health care needs," said Jeff Badger, vice chairman of the Fox Cities Community Health Center board and CFO/Sr. VP of finance at Affinity Health System. "We recognized that there was a need for preventative dental service, especially for children, and it has now become a resource in the community. Patients who have Medicaid coverage and have not had access to dental care in the past now have a place to go. Therefore, Medicaid patients and those patients that do not have insurance or are underinsured can still enjoy the benefits of a medical home that includes behavioral health and dental services."

Affinity Health System, Menasha

Dental clinic

Memorial Medical Center partnered with Family Health Center of Marshfield Clinic to bring a new dental clinic to Neillsville. Undertaking this project was in full alignment with our mission of providing health care, education and prevention, as well as one of our core values: integrity. Contributing to this project was the right thing to do.

Our physicians were seeing a growing number of patients coming to the emergency department, requesting pain medication for dental problems. Providers could help with the immediate pain, but would direct them to dental offices for the true problem-solving procedures. Unfortunately, physicians would see many of these same people back in the emergency department days later. Some patients likely chose to not contact a dentist, while others could not get an appointment.

With this as their motivation, Memorial Medical Center physicians and administration dedicated time and resources to meetings with Family Health Center, the City of Neillsville, local dentists, and area business professionals. In addition, hospital staff traveled to tour other dental clinics and met & corresponded with government representatives to garner support.

Opening in August 2009 and located in Neillsville, the Federally Qualified Community (FQC) Dental Clinic accepts low-income patients, with the majority of funding being state and federal dollars.

This dental project is an excellent example of separate health care systems working together for what is best for patients and the communities they serve.

Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

Gundersen Lutheran assists in providing free dental care

Gundersen Lutheran sponsored and helped staff a free dental clinic for more than 1,500 children and adults in La Crosse. This was a joint effort with the Wisconsin Dental Association (WDA), WDA Foundation teamed and Mission of Mercy (MOM). Dozens of volunteers from Gundersen Lutheran's Department of Dental Specialists, Lab and other departments were among those who provided free cleanings, fillings, extractions and root canals.

The event helped adults and children who are uninsured or underinsured and unable to access routine dental care. All of the work was provided free by using a team of volunteers including 170 dental professionals and students. La Crosse was chosen to host the first MOM program in Wisconsin based on the need in La Crosse, adequate space for the event and most importantly, La Crosse's oral health coalition which is dedicated to increasing dental access to the area.

Given the number of patients seen, Wisconsin's MOM estimates the event substantially exceeded its original financial goal of \$600,000 in donated dental care.

Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Seal Dane

“Oral health has a profound impact on overall health,” says Stanley Brysh, DMD, director of Meriter’s Max Pohle Dental Clinic. Dental health issues are the number one cause for missed school. “Children suffering chronic toothaches, acute pain, dental abscesses, disfigured smiles and dysfunctional speech can’t focus on school and result in learning and behavior problems.”

Through “Seal Dane,” Meriter has partnered with Public Health Madison and Dane County to help children who don’t have a regular dentist. Targeting third-graders, this school-based program raises awareness of the importance of dental health, provides free sealants to eligible children, and coordinates necessary follow-up dental care needs.

During the 2007-2008 school year, Seal Dane reached 2,345 students at 12 area schools with oral health education, and 385 students received sealants on 1,299 teeth.

Meriter Hospital, Madison



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.