

Dentists Do Serve (DDS) & Dentists Make a Difference (DMD) in Wisconsin

These examples of WDA members' charitable dental care efforts illustrate how "Dentists Do Serve" their communities and "Dentists Make a Difference" for underserved children and adults. However, charity alone is not a sufficient oral health care delivery system. Low-income patients suffer for various reasons: failure to care for their own oral health; inability to find a dental office for routine care, because small businesses can't absorb too much income loss; and, lawmakers' failure to sufficiently fund the dental care they have promised.

Charitable Dentistry – Voluntary survey information collected by WDA since 2004 shows each year individual dentists, on average, donate \$10,000 - \$12,000 in care to patients in need. These private-practice donations are in addition to non-reimbursed medical assistance care, volunteer service in community programs and clinics and/or any bills patients fail to pay. Dentists report seeing 7,074 patients and donating nearly \$1.7 million in care during 2008.

Community Dental Clinics – Volunteer dentists provide needed care to patients at more than 40 free or low-cost clinics statewide. Examples include Appleton's Tri-County Community Dental Clinic, Racine's Health Care Network, Milwaukee's Madre Angela Dental Clinic and Monroe's new Fowler Memorial Free Dental Clinic.

Donated Dental Services – The WDA Foundation's Donated Dental Services provides comprehensive dental care at no charge to adults who cannot work due to permanent disabilities; chronic illness; or, advanced age and public aid programs do not meet their oral health needs. Since this program began 11 years ago, 527 dentists have donated more than \$5.2 million in care to 2,010 patients. In addition, 116 dental laboratories have donated more than \$404,000 in supplies and services. The state provides some administrative and lab funding and Delta Dental of Wisconsin and WDA Insurance Programs have also contributed financial support. Dentists donate an average of \$16 in clinical expertise, treatment and materials for every \$1 of state funding. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009 alone, the DDS program delivered a record \$1 million in care.

Give Kids A Smile® 2009 – Hundreds of Wisconsin dentists, dental team members, dental and hygiene students and community volunteers donated an estimated \$647,700 in oral health care and education to 5,654 low-income children during February as part of the seventh annual Give Kids A Smile® national children's dental access program. Wisconsin GKAS events have provided \$2.8 million in care to 18,000 kids since 2003 when the American Dental Association and state and local dental societies launched GKAS during National Children's Dental Health Month.

Mission of Mercy – The WDA and WDA Foundation hosted their first Mission of Mercy in La Crosse, Wis. June 25 – 28, 2009. A team of 903 volunteers, including 170 dentists, 87 dental hygienists and numerous dental assistants, dental students, lab technicians and community members from across Wisconsin delivered \$850,000-plus in donated care to 1,533 adults and children. WDA MOM welcomed 26 percent more patients than expected and the value of dental care provided (i.e., fillings, extractions, cleanings and treatment partials) exceeded an initial estimate by 41 percent. Patients were seen on a first-come, first-served basis; doors opened at 6 a.m. and treatment concluded by 5:30 p.m. June 26 and 27. Patients also received instruction on personal oral hygiene and diet. Some 100 organizations, businesses, dental supply companies and individuals provided \$170,000-plus in monetary and in-kind donations to help cover dental equipment and facility rental, supplies, pharmaceuticals and food costs for the event. WDA and WDA Foundation will team up for their second MOM program on June 25 – 26, 2010 in Sheboygan.

Dentists Surpass Government MA Contributions – An estimated 1,300 Wisconsin-licensed dentists provide care through the state's dental Medicaid, BadgerCare and BadgerCare Plus medical assistance (MA) programs. About 1 million low-income individuals, or 20 percent of Wisconsin residents, are beneficiaries of MA coverage in a 12-month period. Fee-for-service data from the Department of Health and Family Service's Dental Medicaid Fact Sheet for Fiscal Year 2006 (most recent available) shows \$74 million in dental care services provided to MA patients. The state and federal governments paid \$32 million (44 percent) of those charges. Thus, participating dentists donated \$42 million to the state's MA program in FY '06 or more than the Wisconsin and U.S. governments combined.

Individuals' Oral Health Improving – Despite access-to-care concerns for the underserved and medical assistance population, the Kaiser Family Foundation "State Health Facts" Web site shows 73.2 percent of Wisconsin residents had their teeth cleaned by a dental professional in 2008 compared to 71.3 percent nationally. Just 14.4 percent of Wisconsin adults have had all of their natural teeth extracted compared to 18.5 percent of all U.S. adults. A March 2009 USA Today article ranks Wisconsin seventh in the nation in percentage of residents who have seen a dentist in the last 12 months. On a national scope, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Trends in Oral Health Status – United States, 1988-1994 and 1999-2004" reports improvements in Americans' oral health: seven percent more seniors retain some of their natural teeth; moderate and severe gum disease decreased 50 percent among adults ages 20 – 64; and, tooth decay in the permanent teeth of school-age children declined.