

# Saving Smiles

**Story County Community Dental Clinic and Elderly Outreach Project** 26 S. Kellogg; Ames, Iowa 50010 •

Phone: (515) 956-4595 Fax: 515-956-3310

**Total Dollars Award by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:** \$300,000 over a 48-month period (August, 2002 to July, 2006) This project is administered by Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc. [www.micaonline.org](http://www.micaonline.org)

**Local Funding Partners:** The Melsa Foundation, Wellmark Foundation, United Way, Mary Greeley Medical Center and ASSET.

**Project Description:** Saving Smiles is a comprehensive program to make oral health care accessible for uninsured, underinsured, and those using Medicaid as a payment source in Story County, Iowa. The project has two components:

- (1) A fixed three-operator dental clinic providing preventative and restorative dental care.
- (2) An outreach project serves the growing elderly population residing in nursing homes who often lack regular preventative dental care. Within 45 days of entrance into a long term care facility, residents are screened by a registered dental hygienist and started on regular applications of fluoride varnish to prevent decay. A change in licensure for Public Health Hygienists allows registered hygienists to provide cleanings and screenings without a dentist on site. The success of the project has been made possible by the support of local dentists who volunteer every Tuesday evening. In addition, local oral surgeons accept four referrals a week for extractions and periodontists accept referrals of children who are uninsured, underinsured and Medicaid participants. A local laboratory donates dentures and partial plates for those unable to pay

## Accomplishments:

- Petitioned for and received a clinic Medicaid number for volunteer dentists to use when providing services on site.
- Utilized 24 volunteer dentists for a total of 608 hours, while the oral surgeons accept 4 referrals per week.
- Provided preventative and dental services to 2,157 people in 29 months.
- Established partnerships with 9 long-term care facilities and adult day care centers to provide care to residents and training to staff, helping facilities meet JHACO recommendations.
- Petitioned for and received permission to bill Medicaid for elderly services provided in long term care facilities.
- The clinic and elderly project are the elderly rotation for local dental hygiene students.
- Completed 857 elderly screenings in 32 months.
- Combined ABCD funds, Title V Child Health funds, local funding and area pediatrician services to care for the child population outside of the clinic, saving clinic appointments for adults and elderly.
- Collaborated with Iowa Dept. of Public Health-Oral Health Bureau to address needs of underserved populations.
- Collaborated with the University of Iowa Dental College in developing a satisfaction survey for clients.
- Initiated a fundraising board to access local funding and establish speaking engagements.

## Future Plans

- The clinic is recruiting a full-time dentist and hopes to expand our services.
- Local dentists will be working half-days, at a reduced rate, to build up clientele to support a full-time dentist.

## Challenges

- Although Story County, Iowa has a huge underserved population, the county is not a designated dental provider shortage area. Therefore, no loan repayment programs are readily available for graduating dentists. Project staff is working to set up a loan repayment program that will allow the project to apply for repayment funds if a large proportion of clients served are Medicaid recipients.
- Education is completed with local long-term care facility staff, yet residents are still not receiving adequate daily preventative dental care.