



The Oral Health Foundation Awards Nearly \$650,000 in New Grants to Six Organizations in Massachusetts Working to Reduce Oral Health Disparities in Disadvantaged Populations

Boston, MA, December 12, 2003 -- The Oral Health Foundation today announced that it has selected six organizations to receive nearly \$650,000 in new grant money to provide accessible dental care to vulnerable populations across the state. The grant recipients include: the Boston Public Health Commission's Oral Health Equity Project in Boston, \$113,500; Cape Cod Dentists Care in Orleans, \$70,000; the City of Lowell Health Department's One Smile at a Time II in Lowell, \$87,000; Community Health Connections Family Health Center in Fitchburg, \$206,000; the Family Van Saving Smiles Program of Harvard Medical School in Boston, \$90,500; and Operation Healthy Smile in Marlborough, \$77,500.

The Oral Health Foundation was established in 2000 by DSM, doing business as Delta Dental Plan of Massachusetts, to award annual grants to organizations that are working towards reducing oral health disparities in disadvantaged populations across Massachusetts. In addition to the new grants, ongoing program support will bring the Oral Health Foundation grant awards to \$1,000,000 in 2003.

"Most of the adults and children in Massachusetts at highest risk for dental disease do not have access to routine dental care, much less treatment for serious oral disease. Whether it is for financial, cultural, or geographic reasons, many of our most vulnerable populations are not getting the dental care they need," said Bryan Spence, spokesperson for the Oral Health Foundation. "Through our Foundation's grants, we are able to help these organizations combat the serious lack of accessible dental care for people in need of services in their communities."

The grant money will be used to fund the following initiatives:

- ***Boston Public Health Commission's Oral Health Equity Project*** in Boston will use its \$113,500 grant to provide free dental screening examinations and appropriate preventive care at Boston Housing Authority elderly public housing sites. The Boston Public Health Commission will run this program in collaboration with the Boston University School of Dental Medicine, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Forsyth Dental Hygiene Program at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, and the Tufts School of Dental Medicine, with case management assistance from the Boston University School of Social Work. Students and faculty from each of the collaborating schools will go on site and conduct the screenings and preventive treatments at the housing facilities in each of the neighborhoods.
- ***Cape Cod Dentists Care*** in Orleans will use its \$70,000 grant to develop and implement a volunteer dentist program which will provide treatment to the low-income, uninsured, or MassHealth population living on the Cape on a sliding-fee scale. The program will engage private practice dentists as volunteers to provide no or low-cost services, expand capacity to treat special populations, and track and evaluate the program's progress and outcomes so that its successes can be replicated by other communities. The project also plans to develop other initiatives including providing dental services through a local health center, screening children and adults in school and community settings, directing patients with unmet dental needs to appropriate providers, and offering preventive education programs. The program will be implemented in collaboration with the Lower/Outer Cape Community Coalition.
- ***City of Lowell Health Department One Smile at a Time II*** program in Lowell will use its \$87,000 grant to provide preventive dental care to the 6,280 students in grades Pre-K through grade five in the Lowell public school system. The program will conduct oral health screenings, provide fluoride and sealant treatments, offer oral health education, and then track the effectiveness of these strategies over time. Students from Middlesex Community College's Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting programs will provide much of the preventative dental care and oral health education. The Lowell public school population has a high percentage of children from immigrant families and 30% of Lowell children are at or below the poverty level.

- ***Community Health Connections Family Health Center*** in Fitchburg will use its \$206,000 grant to provide access to dental services for approximately 40,000 low income residents in North Central Massachusetts, particularly in Leominster and Fitchburg. The funds will be used to expand the dental service at the center by 50% to nine chairs. Without expansion, the organization would only have been able to serve about a third of the estimated need. In addition, the Center plans to increase staff to provide additional dental education in schools and to physicians and the communities it serves. An assessment conducted by Community Health Connections found that the health service most lacking to the low income population in North Central Massachusetts is dental care. Over 40,000 MassHealth and uninsured patients have had no local access, with the nearest resource in Worcester, approximately 30 miles away.
- ***Family Van Saving Smiles Program of Harvard Medical School*** in Boston will use its \$90,500 grant to equip and staff its mobile van to provide free culturally and linguistically appropriate oral health education, preventive dental care, and enhanced access to dental services to uninsured and underinsured populations in the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester, as part of a comprehensive health care delivery system that integrates oral health and systemic health care. At full capacity, the Family Van serves up to 7,000 clients per year, many of whom are children.
- ***Operation Healthy Smile*** in Marlborough will use its \$77,500 grant to establish and staff a preventive dental clinic at the Marlborough facility of the Boys and Girls Clubs of MetroWest. The new clinic will provide fluoride treatments, sealants, and nutritional education to children who can not afford these services. Specifically, the clinic will serve the 23% of school children in Marlborough who are eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program and the 22% of students for whom English is a second language. The clinic will also offer preventive programs such as multi-lingual education in preventive dental care, the dangers of smokeless tobacco use, and the risks of oral piercings. Another major task will be to educate parents about the importance of preventive dental care.



The Oral Health Foundation was established by DSM in January 2000 with an initial \$1.5 million donation for grants and \$10 million for endowment. DSM is committed to increasing the endowment to expand its grant-making capabilities to \$1.5 million in 2004, \$2 million in 2005, and \$4 million in 2006 and beyond. This is the fourth year that the Foundation has made grants to needy organizations. Delta Dental Plan of Massachusetts is the largest provider of dental benefits in the state.

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