

MundeleinReview

Mundelein clinic opens doors to homeless kids

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/mundelein/news/874748.mu-dentist-040308-s1.article>)

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BY JOHN ROSZKOWSKI

Some needy Lake County kids earned their first visit to a dentist, thanks to a generous contribution from an anonymous donor.



Dr. Lee Bomgaars gives 3-year-old Jayleon Pope a new toothbrush after his exam Saturday at Healthreach Community Care Clinic in Mundelein.

(Herb Shenkin/For Pioneer Press)



Dr. Egon Schein checks 3-year-old Armani Scaife for cavities during Saturday's free dental care for homeless kids at HealthReach Community Care Clinic in Mundelein.

(Herb Shenkin/For Pioneer Press)

On Saturday, 19 children were transported by bus from the PADS Crisis Services homeless shelter in Waukegan to Mundelein's HealthReach Community Care Clinic to receive free dental care services.

"Almost all of these children have never seen a dentist in their lives. They range in age from 1 to 17," said Betsy Dietel, executive director of the Lake County Community Foundation, a non-profit philanthropic foundation, which is working with PADS and the HealthReach clinic to provide the free dental care.

Dietel said the children, many accompanied by their parents, received dental check-ups by volunteer dentists as well as teeth cleanings and X-rays, if necessary. Some of the children will return for follow-up visits for more serious dental problems, such as cavities, gum disease or orthodontic care.

"The kids were incredibly excited and curious about what was going to happen to them," said Dietel. "Most had never sat in a dentist chair before. Some were a little afraid at first. Many of them were there with their parents, who thought it was a wonderful thing for their children."

Dietel said the children and parents were also taught preventive dental care and hygiene tips.

Dietel said this is the second in a series of free dental visits that will be offered to homeless children at the Mundelein clinic throughout the year. In January, 26 children from PADS received free dental care at the clinic.

Jim Zimmerman, executive director of HealthReach, said the Mundelein clinic's pediatric dental program has been very successful so far. In addition to the 45 PADS children who have received free dental care, he said another 42 low-income kids have also received dental services since the program began in January.

"Since Jan. 1, we've provided dental care to 87 children with a total of 101 visits," he said.

Dietel said the free dental care for the PADS children was made possible by a \$50,000 grant from an anonymous donor who "wanted to do something in Lake County that would have a visible impact on peoples' lives."

Dietel said they hope to continue to offer dental services to more homeless children.

"We're looking to serve approximately 200 children from PADs before the end of the year," Zimmerman said.