



Students Train to Prevent Dental Abuse and Neglect

December 6 2010 2:05 PM

Godfrey, Ill. – Dental students from Lewis and Clark attended Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness (P.A.N.D.A.) training this past November to learn how to identify signs of abuse and neglect, and report a suspected situation.

The training, offered through a program instituted in 1995 by the Illinois State Dental Society, took place on Nov. 4 in the Trimpe Building Advanced Technology Center, and included 70 Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene students.

Illinois dentists and dental hygienists are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and neglect.

“I commend the Lewis and Clark Community College dental programs for providing this invaluable training,” said Margarette Trushel, executive director of the Oasis Women's Center in Alton. “Since 1996 in Madison County, there have been at least 58 domestic violence related deaths: 30 women, 18 children and 10 men. Dentists may often be the first professionals to identify a victim of abuse as 65 percent of all physical child abuse and 75 percent of all adult physical domestic violence result in injuries to the head, neck, and/or mouth. Oasis would also like to thank the college and program coordinator Michelle Singley for all that they do to support victims of domestic violence and their families in our community.”

Cathy Anderson, Mobile Unit RDH and program faculty, said the training was not only important in assuring competency in identifying suspected signs of abuse and neglect in

patient populations, but was also essential in meeting the objectives of a grant the program received last year from the Alliance of the Illinois State Dental Society.

Alliance grant monies will support the Soothing Smiles program, which will provide aid to victims of abuse and/or neglect seeking shelter at the Oasis Women's Center in Alton.

"Numerous community projects have been developed in the Dental Hygiene Program, but the Soothing Smiles Program is near and dear to our hearts," said program coordinator Michelle Singley. "The increased knowledge, heightened awareness, and specialized training that the Lewis and Clark faculty, staff, and students have received will extend far beyond this program.

Participation in the Soothing Smiles Program will provide our students and oral health care professionals with inclusive skills that they will continue to utilize as they rise to meet real world challenges in their private practices, institutional, and educational settings. The children participating in our Alton School Dental Days Program, and our Head Start Pops for Tots Programs, and any senior citizens that participate in our geriatric programs, will reap immeasurable benefits. Also, the patients that we see on a daily basis in our Paul B. Hanks Dental Clinic on campus, as well as those seeking dental services aboard the mobile dental health unit, will most certainly benefit from this extremely important and valuable assessment program. There is no way to place a value on the benefits of initiating life altering changes for children in crisis, or even more dramatically, saving even one person's life."

Palliative oral care kits for women and children containing dental supplies that will soothe oral injuries, and provide comfort to victims will be dispensed. In addition, stuffed panda bears, the program's symbol of hope, will be provided to injured children.

Dental Hygiene students and faculty will also be on call and available for oral health counseling as needed.

"I am extremely pleased that we are able to offer support to our community through this important program," Anderson said. "I can't think of anything more crucial to our mission than protecting our children."

For more information about P.A.N.D.A. training or the Soothing Smiles program, contact Cathy Anderson at (618) 468-4423 or by e-mail at canderso@lc.edu.

Photo: Dr. Peter Pirmann, chairman of the Illinois State Dental Society, Dental Education Committee, addresses the Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting students and faculty during Lewis and Clark's P.A.N.D.A. training session.