

Alton's Riverbend Head Start Among 18 Recipients Of Grant To Improve Children's Oral Health

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NAPERVILLE – Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation, the 501(c)(3) charitable arm of Delta Dental of Illinois, awarded nearly \$245,000 to 18 nonprofit and community organizations through its annual Community Grants Program. Each organization shares the Foundation's mission of improving children's oral health throughout Illinois.

“Ongoing disparities worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic make it difficult for many Illinois children to receive needed oral health care,” said Lora Vitek, executive director of the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation. “With our annual Community Grants Program, we’re continuing to help alleviate obstacles to oral health care by working hand-in-hand with organizations statewide to make sure Illinois children can access quality health care.”

Since 2012, Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation’s Community Grants Program has provided close to \$1.5 million in support to organizations that help increase access to oral health care and education. The following Alton organization is among Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation’s 2021 Community Grants Program recipients:

Riverbend Head Start and Family Services, Alton: Riverbend Head Start and Family Services will use its grant for the 2021-2022 Oral Health Education and Access Project, which serves 759 participants enrolled in its Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, including children age 5 and under. Funding will also help provide oral health care and education to expecting mothers for a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Seventeen additional Illinois organizations received 2021 Community Grants from the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation. They are:

CASA Kane County, Geneva: CASA Kane County ensures Illinois children in abuse, neglect and private guardianship cases within the Juvenile Court system have access to dental and medical care. Almost 35 percent of children and teens enter foster care with significant dental and oral health problems, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Grant funding will help CASA Kane County continue its work to help reduce this statistic.

Chicago Family Health Center (CFHC), Chicago: Chicago Family Health Center offers dental services at four of its six sites: Chicago Lawn, South Chicago, Pullman, and East Side. The grant will help provide oral health services to 1,400 children.

Erie Family Health Foundation, Chicago: Erie Family Health Foundation aims to reach its pre-COVID-19 pandemic volume of patients from birth to age 18, adding 500 more patients this year than the prior year. Erie will use its grant to provide oral health services to more than 10,000 Illinois children at its clinics in Chicago, Waukegan, and Evanston.

Foster Family Resource Center of Southern Illinois, Carbondale: Foster Family Resource Center of Southern Illinois plans to use its grant for a program that allows Illinois children in foster care to receive basic dental treatments such as fillings,

extractions, and cleanings – at dental offices that do not accept Medicaid. There are currently 1,471 Illinois children in foster care, relative care, group homes, or institutions within the 22-county service area of the Foster Family Resource Center, and the program will serve as many of these children as possible with the grant funds.

Girls in the Game, Chicago and Bloomington: Girls in the Game will use its grant to support After School, one of its largest programs serving over 1,300 girls annually through weekly programming and one-day events. Participants learn traditional sports like basketball and fitness activities such as yoga. In addition to lesson plans on smart eating and physical health, girls participate in personal hygiene rotations specifically focused on oral health.

Howard Area Community Center, Chicago: Howard Area Community Center (HACC) Eleanor Wester Dental Clinic provides preventive, therapeutic, and emergency dental care, as well as bilingual oral health education, to families who are uninsured or underinsured. Grant funds will be used to increase HACC's oral screening and education program in its early childhood centers and provide services to 250 children in the next year.

Howard Brown Health, Chicago: Grant funding will support outreach to families living in Chicago's 60620 and 60621 ZIP codes to ensure they have access to the dental care they need. In addition to dental outreach, Howard Brown Health will connect families with social services, basic needs support, and primary medical care to ensure each family's holistic needs are met.

Infant Welfare Society of Chicago, Chicago: Infant Welfare Society (IWS) of Chicago delivers oral health services to children from underrepresented groups. With the grant, IWS will provide access to equitable oral health care, education, prevention, and treatment to more than 4,000 children ages 17 and younger.

Milestone Dental Clinic, Rockford: Milestone Dental Clinic works to develop an individualized dental treatment plan for each patient with special health care needs seen at the clinic. The grant will cover charges for an oral exam, cleaning, and fluoride treatment not covered by insurance or Medicaid or for patients with no payment source.

Mobile Care Chicago, Chicago: Mobile Care Chicago's dental clinic serves Chicago and Waukegan where the need for dentists that provide comprehensive pediatric oral health care is high. With grant funding, Mobile Care Chicago plans to provide care to 4,500 children.

Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society, Oak Park: The grant will support the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society's (IWS) Portable Dentistry Program,

which conducts preventive dental care — oral exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments, and dental sealants — in schools during the academic year for over 2,000 children annually. Students needing urgent care are referred to the IWS Children's Clinic for restorative care, a unique aspect of the program that allows for a seamless flow from diagnosis to treatment.

Pillars Community Health, LaGrange: Pillars Community Health will continue to prioritize the health and safety of its patients and staff while encouraging engagement in needed preventive and restorative oral health services and oral health education. Grant funding will be used as operating support to assist in providing dental services to the child and adolescent patients.

Promise Healthcare, Champaign: SmileHealthy is a program at Promise Healthcare's Frances Nelson Health Center that provides oral health education during well-child and prenatal appointments and introduces patients to their onsite dental center. Grant funding will go toward this project, which will serve 500 children through Well Child Clinics and 250 pregnant women – preparing them to take care of their baby's oral health. The program will also provide oral health education to children at Head Start, preschools, schools, and health fairs reaching 3,000 education contacts in 2022.

St. Coletta's of Illinois, Tinley Park: St. Coletta's of Illinois will use its grant to provide oral health education to over 80 students at St. Coletta's Kennedy School through a consultant and oral health expert. The Kennedy School serves students diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the south and southwest suburbs of Chicago.

University of Illinois Board of Trustees, UIC Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Chicago: The grant will support the Treating Our Toddlers (TOT) program for infant oral health, a multidisciplinary effort focusing on establishing a dental home for children from birth to age 3. This program uses a holistic approach that will assess the dental, medical, nutritional, psychosocial, and developmental needs of patients. Approximately 300 Illinois children will be served with the help of this grant.

Well Child Center, Elgin: The Well Child Center Pediatric Dental Clinic and First Tooth Visit Program provide preventive and restorative dental care for children at low or no cost. The grant will provide greater access to comprehensive oral health care by allowing the clinic to expand its hours to include evenings and Saturdays.

Zion-Benton Children's Service, Zion: Zion-Benton Children's Service provides preventive and restorative dental care in a welcoming and accessible environment. They

incorporate dental health education into each visit to help patients establish good dental hygiene habits that will last a lifetime. With this grant, ZBCS aims to serve 400 children between the ages of 3 and 18.

The next Community Grants Program application cycle is tentatively set to begin in fall 2022. For more information on the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation Community Grants Program and/or to support the Foundation, visit deltadentalil.com/community-grants.

About Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation

Delta Dental is the national dental benefits leader covering 1 in 3 Americans who have dental coverage. Delta Dental of Illinois is one of 39 member companies that make up the national Delta Dental system. Based in Naperville, Illinois, Delta Dental of Illinois provides dental benefit programs to more than 6,000 Illinois companies and covers 2 million individuals, employees, and family members nationwide. Delta Dental of Illinois is committed to improving oral health in our community and furthers this commitment through the work of its 501(c)(3) charitable arm, Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation. In the past decade, combined efforts of Delta Dental of Illinois and Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation have provided more than \$15 million to programs and organizations in Illinois that improve the oral health of the state's residents. For additional information, visit deltadentalil.com/ddilfoundation.