



OSF, Lewis & Clark Oral Health Partnership Benefits Patients, Students Alike

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - OSF Healthcare and Lewis & Clark Community College partnered to help OSF patients with oral health needs while giving students valuable hands-on experience, and the partnership has been a major benefit for all parties involved.

Kristi Davis with OSF and Dr. Kent Splaingard with LCCC appeared on an episode of [Our Daily Show! on Riverbender.com](https://www.riverbender.com) to discuss the partnership and how it got started.

As an inpatient speech therapist for OSF, Davis said she also deals with “swallowing disorders” and emphasized the importance of keeping one’s mouth clean to benefit their health overall. After noticing many patients weren’t keeping their mouths clean, she looked to LCCC for assistance.

“Having a clean mouth is really, really important ... a lot of patients weren’t keeping their mouth clean, and I only have so much time - some of these mouths required a lot more than me,” Davis said. “You look around the hospital and you have nursing students and you have therapy students - I thought, ‘ Why not have dental students who have more understanding of how to clean this and more time?’ and so we got a hold of Lewis & Clark.”

Splaingard, a retired private practice dentist and instructor at LCCC, said the partnership came at a great time for the college’s dental program, which regularly sees OSF patients.

“It came at an awesome time, because we had just kind of gotten off of COVID and we lost a community program that we were doing, the school health programs, where we were going out to the schools in a mobile unit,” Splaingard said. “We need to get the

students involved in community, community, community, and it kind of became my mantra to get them involved in community.

“One of my bosses said, ‘There’s a possibility of a program,’ and we jumped on it, because it sounded like an awesome idea for education and evaluation and teaching and getting the students out in the community.”

Davis added that both students and patients are learning just how interconnected oral health and general health really are, while Splaingard described the learning process for his students as dental detective work.

“We kind of evolve it from the standpoint of being a detective, where we’re looking at clues,” Splaingard said. “You know, they get all this stuff didactically in their classes, and they know it, they’ve passed their tests, and they can reiterate it - but then when they actually visually see it, they have to use a little intuition ... it’s a mystery, and we go about it almost like a discovery, from that standpoint.

“It’s amazing how much the students know, but they’ve never seen. Once you see it, it’s a totally different picture. You never forget the visual - you may forget the textbook, but you never forget the visual.”

Splaingard and Davis both emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and consistent dental hygiene, with Splaingard concluding by saying “a healthy smile is a reward.”

The full interview with Davis and Splaingard can be watched at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).



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