

# SIU School Of Dental Medicine Opens Registration For Annual Veteran's Care Day

by Submitted by SIUE  
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EDWARDSVILLE - SIU School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) has opened registration for its annual Veteran's Day event known as Veteran's Care Day offering free exams, x-rays, cleanings, fillings and extractions to those who have military service. If this past Give Kids A Smile Day (GKAS) event, held annually during the October school holiday, is any indication, dental students and alumni will have a busy day in the clinic.

“They’ve been all smiles when they come in here,” said Emily Bone, a first-year student dressed as a tooth fairy for this past October 9 day at the clinic for elementary school-aged children. “Coming here and seeing everybody in scrubs or scrub caps can be intimidating.”

The tooth fairy and other welcoming faces, sans costume, are set up to greet students after their appointments in the nearby gym with games and patient education. Bone said, “We get to walk around help make the kids feel comfortable after their experience in the clinic and just encourage good oral habits and make it a fun thing to do to come to the dentist.”

Children, some of whom are first-time patients, numbered 168 appointments for the day when 150 patients were expected. This nearly 25% gain compared to last year’s number amounted to “\$91,867 worth of dentistry to children in need,” said Katie Kosten, DMD, FACD, FICD, director of community dentistry. “I love it. Everybody gets involved. The whole campus. We had volunteers from faculty, alumni, and from Lewis and Clark Community College.”

Parents of eight-year-old Joseph Anrig appreciate the “painless and really nice setup.” The family recently moved to the area and had yet to find a dentist. Joseph’s father Chris Anrig said, “For annual checkups, this is a good idea.”

Although GKAS takes place at multiple clinics across the country, SIU SDM emphasizes free comprehensive care, which includes all above-mentioned services and even root canals, if necessary.

“I kind of just sit there and let them do their job,” said seven-year-old Nazir who traveled with his mother from Missouri for his appointment. “My teeth are clean!”

GKAS is a busy day for all involved including those assisting the third and fourth-year dental students in charge of care. The clinic is bustling with activity which includes dental hygienists back and forth to the sterilization area. “Every set of instruments is being used,” said Melissa McDowell, dental hygienist supervisor.

Kosten continues to be encouraged by what these holiday appointments mean to SIU SDM students and alums offering pro bono care: “It’s a good experience for them to help a lot of these kids who are on our waiting list to become patients because they can’t find another provider to meet their comprehensive needs. These students and those parents have been waiting a long time to get that care.”

The call for veterans is for free dental care on **Thursday, November 9**. In recent years, SIU SDM clinic has seen more than 100 veterans totaling more than \$180,000 in free dental care.

To best manage patient care, appointments are required for the event. **To register, call 618-474-7200.**