

L&C Family Health Clinic and Dental Hygiene Program Receive Grants to Help Medically Underserved

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Godfrey, Ill. – Recent grants awarded to Lewis and Clark’s Family Health Clinic and the dental hygiene program will fund health promotion and education for diabetic patients and dental services and education to the medically underserved residents of the college’s district.

The Family Health Clinic and Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation (SIHF) received a \$50,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation, to be used to empower low-income patients who have diabetes and related cardiovascular disease conditions to improve their health through a personal commitment to health promotion, said Donna Meyer, L&C dean of health sciences.

“Through our partnership with Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation, we will identify 100 patients who we have diagnosed with these health problems through SIHF’s Alton clinic locations,” she said. “Each patient will meet with Lewis and Clark nursing students, a registered nurse and a nurse practitioner to develop a relationship that will ultimately utilize our nurses and nursing students as „coaches? to guide, encourage, nudge and remind the patients through activities that take a holistic approach to providing health education and care.”

The Lewis and Clark nursing students will work with patients to create individualized health promotion plans that will involve exercise regimens and dietary modifications to address issues of cardiovascular disease and adult-onset diabetes.

“This grant-funded project will also provide our nursing students with another excellent and unique clinical experience,” Meyer said.

SIHF Vice President Rick Diaz said that through previous Kresge grant-funded studies, the L&C/SIHF partnership has realized that the proper approach to improving health outcomes needs to incorporate a consideration of the social determinants of health.

“The L&C students will be personally engaging with the patients and assessing factors related to their social determinants of health and lifestyle,” Diaz said. “Many patients face financial barriers such as energy and housing costs, coupled with the cost of their medications to maintain proper health. This grant will provide each patient with a coach that will connect these individuals with the proper community assistance programs, as well as provide them with powerful education tools that will enable them to take control of their health.”

Lewis and Clark's dental hygiene program also recently received a grant worth \$22,271 from the Daughters of Charity Foundation to support a summer project with the Alton Boys and Girls Club. Through the project, Lewis and Clark's mobile health unit and the dental hygiene staff and students will deliver services to the club directly, providing dental education for club members and their parents, free preventive dental services and follow up activities to ensure that lessons on dental education are being practiced on a regular basis. The free dental care provided to the Alton Boys and Girls Club children will include dental exams, teeth cleanings, fluoride treatments, and, if needed, dental sealants.

"The college partners with the Boys and Girls Club on numerous events throughout the year," Meyer said. "We are pleased that we can enhance our partnership through dental services and education with the club members, with the support of the Daughters of Charity grant." Meyer said the grant will provide funding for Lewis and Clark to serve all of the Alton Boys and Girls Club summer program enrollees, approximately 200 children between the ages of 6-18. The mobile unit will be on site at the club three days a week from now through Aug. 5 to provide the services.

"We are excited to be partnering with Lewis and Clark in offering our members preventative dental services and education," Alton Boys and Girls Club Director Al Womack said. "We are hopeful that this program will encourage and promote good dental hygiene practices amongst youth."

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