

Human Needs Dental Program

In 2000, an annual preventive dental exam and sealant program for our elementary school students was initiated and coordinated by the D-9 Foundation. Thanks to Oregon Institute of Technology, Community Health Center, Jackson County Health, local dentists, and grants from the Windermere Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation, the program which began with White City schools is now extending throughout the district.

Program History

In accordance with the Foundation's mission statement to provide financial resources for any student/human needs within the District, a committee titled "Human Needs" was formed in 2000. The committee was led by Joan Jensen.

The committee met early that year with District 9 school counselors and county child development specialists to review and understand the scope of health and family needs in the district. The committee unanimously agreed that the foremost special need in the district is dental care.

As one administrator put it, "Children lose class time due to poor dental hygiene...cavities can be painful," and that many students "never see a dentist. Those who don't learn to live with the pain that distracts from their learning."

In pursuing the issue, the committee learned of a dental sealant program offered at low cost by Oregon Institute of Technology. Dental sealant is a plastic coating applied to a child's molars to protect against decay. One sealant application can protect a child's teeth for as long as ten years.

Through the program, OIT dental hygiene students, under the supervision of a practicing dentist, visit elementary schools to provide students with dental care education and a brief dental exam to identify students who are candidates for sealant. With parental approval, the sealant is applied during a subsequent visit. Approximately one-third of the students screened are candidates for the sealant.

In the 2003 program for White City Elementary and Mountain View Elementary, OIT reported that the average cost per child who received the sealant was \$11.31. By contrast, receiving the sealant in a dental office would average \$138.11 per child.

To cover costs, the D-9 Foundation pursues funding through grants, state and federal programs, and private donations. In addition, the Foundation's volunteers continue to provide administrative leadership, guidance and coordination with the school district to arrange the visits by OIT, volunteer dentists, and other volunteer health care workers.