

Sullivan County Dental Initiative

A program of the Sullivan County Oral Health Collaborative dba Community Dental Care of Claremont

“You probably never would have guessed it, but one of the front lines of public health in New Hampshire is on the second floor of an elementary school in Claremont.” A quote from NHPR health reporter Jack Rodolico article about the state oral health in New Hampshire 2015.

<http://nhpr.org/post/can-fixing-childs-environment-help-fix-her-teeth>

The Sullivan County Dental Initiative provides screenings and on-site preventive care to over 800 children in dental need throughout Sullivan County, concentrating on ages 1- 12. Under the management of a Certified Public Health Dental Hygienist, the preventive on-site dental services include dental cleanings, sealants, temporary fillings, fluoride varnish and decay stopping fluoride (SDF) and the all-important follow through and case management.

“The last Statewide dental survey of 3rd graders in 2014, found the overall untreated tooth decay rate had dropped 32 percent but the children in the poorest school districts had more than twice as much decay history as children in richer districts. Sullivan County was a bright spot in the data. Over the past 10yrs, Claremont’s rate of untreated decay dropped from 64% to 10%. In that time, the Kyle Messier has seen nearly every child in the District.” Jack Rodolico NHPR. Even in the midst of the current opioid crisis and its effects of vulnerable children, the SDCI’s comprehensive program has kept the untreated decay rate between 10-15%.

The SCDI realizes that dental neglect for many children in NH is a hidden problem. There is a very small safety net in NH for dental health. The Sullivan County Dental Initiative strives to create the opportunity for children in Sullivan County to have a lifetime of dental health through providing screenings, on-site preventive treatment, case management and advocacy for good dental health for all.

Along with providing much needed preventive dental services to 800 children in Sullivan County, the SCDI is currently participating in an important 5 year NYU/NIDR study. This study is designed to answer the National Institute of Dental Research’s unanswered question– how much of which preventive treatments will increase access, improve health and reduce costs for children in rural America. The answers to these questions will help shape important dental health policies in the near future.

Kyle Messier RDH, CPHDH, BS
Certified Public Health Dental Hygienist
Sullivan County Dental Initiative
Program Manager

Thoughts from a current volunteer:

Ellen Thompson RN, BS

I have been assisting Kyle since shortly after I retired from Dartmouth Hitchcock in 2011. An amazing project! The kids are so appreciative and proud of their abilities to “take care of MY teeth” when so much of their life experience is outside their control.

Learning how to brush their teeth, connecting with local dentists and getting important preventative and corrective care are all part of the care delivered. Most important in my view is the case management services convincing parents to get their children dental care. Children cannot learn or sustain themselves when their teeth hurt. These services are an essential part of efforts to help children succeed. I can’t convey the feeling of having children stop Kyle in the hall of their school and tell her they are taking care of their teeth, brushing every day! They are so proud of themselves!