

healing gifts

welcome to

Advocate Health Care is a not-for-profit family of caregivers, grounded in faith and serving the needs of 2 million people in Chicagoland. We pursue a distinctive commitment to both clinical excellence and community outreach. In the face of shrinking insurance reimbursements, reduced government support and constantly rising costs, patient fees alone cannot support this commitment. Advocate Charitable Foundation staff and volunteers raise vital funds that allow us to continue this mission. Related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Church of Christ, the Advocate family is made up of 200 sites of care, eight acute care hospitals and two children's hospitals:

[Advocate Bethany Hospital](#)

[Advocate Christ Medical Center](#)

[Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital](#)

[Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital](#)

[Advocate Hope Children's Hospital](#)

[Advocate Hospice](#)

[Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center](#)

[Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital](#)

[Advocate Lutheran General Hospital](#)

[Advocate South Suburban Hospital](#)

[Advocate Trinity Hospital](#)

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he stories in this issue of *Healing Gifts* remind me of two very important things. The first is that Advocate's hospitals and programs provide their communities with an extraordinarily diverse array of health-care services: life-saving extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) for infants who can't breathe on their own; free or low-cost dental care for homeless people and other underserved groups; breast-cancer screening and prevention for women of all races, but especially for at-risk women of color; pet therapy for hospice patients. You name it.

The second is that Advocate Charitable Foundation is uniquely set up to help our donors do what is important *to them*. Mary Kay Bonds is funding scholarships so that EMTs can complete their training to become paramedics like her late daughter, Julie. Toni Auld is providing emergency overnight bags for parents who aren't prepared when their newborn babies are transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit. The Otho S.A. Sprague Memorial Institute is expediting the replacement of our aging dental van with a \$175,000 challenge grant.

When it comes to how to make a difference at Advocate, once again you name it! Thank you, as always, for your continued interest and support.

Susan J. Ell, R.N., J.D., *President, Advocate Charitable Foundation*

filling more



than cavities

Illinois Masonic Medical Center's Mobile Dental Program is helping to fill gaps in access to oral health care.

It is a damp Friday evening in May, and **Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center's** dental van is camped out on the corner of 71st and Jeffery on Chicago's South Side. Tonight the Mobile Dental Program is partnering with The Night Ministry, a not-for-profit social-service organization that provides support and health-care services to homeless people in Chicago.

Outside the van, people from the neighborhood are visiting with each other and hoping it doesn't start to rain again as they wait their turn to see the dentist. Inside, it smells like a dentist's office, it sounds like a dentist's office, but it feels like a crowded airplane cabin, with an attending dentist, two dental residents, two assistants, two dental chairs, all the necessary drills, tubes and mirrors, sterilization and X-ray equipment, a protective lead curtain, drawers full of supplies and lots of activity.

Someone knocks on the door and asks if she can get her teeth cleaned. "Sorry, we're only doing emergency extractions tonight," explains Adrian Codel, D.D.S., tonight's attending dentist. The van usually functions as a full-service dental clinic, where patients can receive simple preventative care, diagnostic exams, fillings, X-rays, sealants, simple restorative work, dentures and oral surgery, at no or reduced cost. But when teeth need to be pulled, that becomes the first priority—and tonight it seems like everyone has a toothache.

Oral health = overall health

Harvey Wigdor, D.D.S., director of the General Practice Residency Program at Illinois Masonic Medical Center launched the Mobile Dental Program in 2001. Since that time, the clinic-on-wheels has provided much-needed dental care to

thousands of underserved and hard-to-reach populations: the elderly, children and families from low-income households, disabled people, immigrants and the homeless. With annual funding from individuals, foundations, corporations, government agencies and Advocate Health Care, the Mobile Dental Program is doing its part to close the gaps in access to health care that plague these populations.

It is estimated that between 80 and 96 percent of residents in long-term care facilities have unmet dental treatment needs. Approximately one-third of low-income children

have untreated tooth decay, which can cause pain, absences from school and poor self-image—all factors that affect success later in life. For people living on the street, maintaining basic oral hygiene is extremely difficult, and typically not a high priority, resulting in acute dental problems. A complicated combination of economic, transportation and communication challenges create these alarming disparities.

The patients who visit the van on this night are



testimony to the depth of the need. Terry, for instance, last saw the dentist 20 years ago. Years of neglect and hard living have rotted his teeth all the way down to the bone, a situation Dr. Codel calls “an infection waiting to happen.” Several front teeth will need to come out.

The importance of dental care cannot be overstated: Oral diseases and disorders can affect the health and well-being of the entire body. “Our teeth are part of us, and if one part of an organism is sick or in pain, the whole organism is sick or in pain,” says Dr. Wigdor. Recent studies have found associations between chronic oral infections and gum disease and serious health problems such as diabetes, heart and lung disease, stroke, pancreatic cancer and premature birth—not to

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mention the ability to eat and communicate. Dr. Wigdor quotes one longevity study that shows the best way to increase one’s life expectancy by four years is to floss every day.

Tonight’s patients are being diagnosed and treated by Katie Thornton, D.D.S., and Kate Goesel, D.D.S., recent dental school graduates in Illinois Masonic’s General Practice Residency. They are aided by dental assistants Nora Hernandez and Omar Abarca. The entire team is hoping the rain holds off because the van’s roof leaks, creating a need for buckets placed in strategic—but inconvenient—spots. Fortunately, there’s a major fund-raising effort underway this year to raise money to replace the aging vehicle. (See sidebar.)

Challenge grant will help fund new dental van

After more than seven years of traveling the streets of Chicago to bring care to thousands of needy patients, the mobile dental van is showing its age. “It has taken a beating,” says Harvey Wigdor, D.D.S., founder of the Mobile Dental Program and director of the General Practice Residency Program at Illinois Masonic Medical Center. “It’s crowded, the roof leaks when it rains, and it’s in the shop for repairs on average one day a week.” That means a 20 percent reduction in the number of patients who could have received much-needed dental care, at no or reduced cost.

Now, the medical center has been given a unique opportunity to fund a new, state-of-the-art van: The Otho S.A. Sprague Memorial Institute has issued a \$175,000 challenge grant to help fund the purchase of a new van—nearly half of the estimated purchase price. To date, Advocate Charitable Foundation has raised \$27,500 of the remaining \$185,000.

“The van does no good for anyone if it’s sitting in the garage,” says James Alexander, executive director of the Sprague Institute, which recently

began an oral-health initiative.

Since its inception, the Mobile Dental Program has provided oral health care to more than 4,000 needy patients. In the process, it has helped to train dozens of dental students and residents, many of whom subsequently have chosen to practice in underserved communities. The program partners with 20 different organizations, including The Night Ministry, homeless shelters, schools, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and health clinics for the uninsured. “We are committed to going to each site once a month, but with the van needing so many repairs, we have been unable to meet that commitment,” says Dr. Wigdor.

A new van will include all new equipment—two larger and more private examination/operating rooms, air conditioning for better infection control, a power chairlift and improved access for disabled people—and an estimated 20 percent increase in capacity. For more information or to make a gift toward the purchase of a new van, please call Benjamin Imdieke, vice president of development, Illinois Masonic Medical Center, at 773.296.7424.

When there's nowhere else to turn

The word “vulnerable” has become a common term to describe people who are poor, homeless, uninsured or otherwise lacking in resources. Nowhere does that term seem more appropriate than in the dentist's chair, where even the most stoic and streetwise reveal their softer side.

Eric, for instance, winces as Dr. Thornton begins extraction of a decayed wisdom tooth. “My tooth has been bothering me on and off for months, but it's been really bad the last couple of days,” he says. Dr. Thornton is worried that she might not be able to complete the procedure, because the anesthetic doesn't seem to be working. She calls on Dr. Codel for his expertise, and together they are able to successfully numb the patient.



Meanwhile, Dr. Goesel is struggling to remove an extremely stubborn wisdom tooth from another patient. “It's a boy!” shouts Dr. Codel when, to the relief of both patient and dentist, the tooth is finally out.

For Drs. Goesel and Thornton, working on the dental van provides an invaluable education, not

only in dentistry, but in the community need the Mobile Dental Program serves. “Being out of work with no medical help, this van's services are very important to me,” says Terry, the patient who had not seen a dentist in 20 years. After Novocain, three extractions and stitches, he is good to go—with extra gauze, a painkiller and instructions to come back the next time the van is in the area.

“We are driven to help our patients because we know there's nowhere else for them to go,” says Dr. Thornton. Dr. Goesel agrees. “Our job is to help people,” she says, “and not just those who can pay.” ■



In memoriam

Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center lost a longtime friend and donor this year. Mr. Norman L. Chapman passed away in April, but his legacy will live on through the physicians, caregivers, patients and families who have benefited from his generosity. The Joan and Norman Chapman Family Foundation has been a generous supporter of the Cardiac Arrhythmia Research and Fellowship Program, Graduate Medical Education Training and the Ringel Conference Rooms, all at Illinois

Masonic. Their gifts honored three physicians and friends—Drs. Edwin Feldman, Richard Kehoe and Paul Ringel—who were instrumental in Chapman's health care at the hospital. “He inherited little more than a work ethic and a good name; with it, he became a philanthropist,” said Chapman's son, Alan, during his father's eulogy. “And if he spoke of this aspect of his life at all, it was from the standpoint of humility and a sincere desire to return something to a community and society that had admittedly been very good to him.”