

The Minnesota Dental Foundation (MDF) offers financial support and in-kind services for outreach programs that meet the mission of the MDF by providing dental services to underserved populations, by promoting dental health initiatives, or by supporting dental profession career and volunteer opportunities. The focus is on providing resources that will make lasting improvements in the oral health of Minnesotans and enhance the dental profession in the state.

Each year the MDF Board of Directors reviews applications for grants that fit these criteria. Support for programs and oral health initiatives may change each year based upon issues facing the dental profession, but the core principle of benefiting the underserved remains constant. Since 2001, through December 31, 2024, the Foundation has awarded \$4,676,688 in grants and/or in-kind services to fund 789 oral health initiatives. In addition, \$2,000,000 has been dispersed by the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation in the collaborative project to help access dental care in rural HPSAs. And collaborative projects with DentaQuest are valued at \$7,500. Thus, a total of \$6,684,188 has been allocated to help the underserved access dental care.

2024 Recipients

In 2024, MDF gave a total of \$567,882 in cash to 37 projects. Some of the recipients may have received assistance for more than one project. Of those dollars, funding was provided for five internal programs – Give Kids a Smile Marketing, Donated Dental Services, Martha Mordini Rukavina Loan Forgiveness Program, Minnesota Mission of Mercy and the Retired Dentist Program, at a total cost of \$492,807. All of the funded programs help increase access to care for underserved populations or help to build a sustainable oral health workforce in Minnesota.

Give Kids a Smile

The following community clinics received funding for the two-day charitable program in February that provides free preventive and restorative dental care to children from low-income families. Grant monies help defray the costs for dental supplies and oral health education materials for the children seen at these non-profit clinics. In 2024, 2,501 children were seen in 57 community clinics and private dental offices. The value of the services provided was \$1,166,254 by 745 volunteers, which included 128 dentists.

- CentraCare Foundation, Willmar
- Children's Dental Services, Minneapolis
- Community Dental Care, Buffalo
- Community Dental Care, Maplewood
- Community Dental Care, Robbinsdale
- Community Dental Care, Rochester
- Community Dental Care, St. Paul
- Lake Superior College Dental Hygiene Clinic, Duluth
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- University of Minnesota School of Dentistry - Give Kids a Smile, Minneapolis

Community Outreach and Allied Dental Educational Programs

A number of community-based clinics, outreach programs and allied dental education programs provide critical dental services to children and adults who otherwise would not have access to oral health care.

- CARE Clinic, Red Wing
- CentraCare Foundation, Willmar
- Central Lakes College, Brainerd
- Children's Dental Health Services, Rochester
- Ely Community Health Center, Ely
- Family HealthCare, Fargo, ND

- Gillette Children's Hospital Foundation, St. Paul
- Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, Minneapolis
- Hope Dental Clinic, St. Paul
- Just Kids Dental, Two Harbors
- Lake Superior Community Health Center, Duluth
- Lakewood Health System, Staples
- Let's Smile, Inc., Owatonna
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Mission Outpost Dental Clinic, Burnsville
- New Beginnings Pregnancy + Family Support, Grand Rapids
- Northern Dental Access Center, Bemidji
- Ready, Set, Smile PA, Minneapolis
- Sawtooth Mountain Clinic Oral Health Task Force, Grand Marais
- Sharing and Caring Hands, Minneapolis
- The Salvation Army Good Samaritan Dental Clinic, Rochester

Internal Programs

The following programs of the Minnesota Dental Foundation provided care to the underserved.

Donated Dental Services (DDS), a program of Dental Lifeline Network, provided free dental care to disabled, elderly and medically fragile patients in private dental offices. In the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, 168 patients received \$1,054,290 in comprehensive care by 383 dental volunteers and 81 laboratories. This program is funded by a \$90,000 grant from the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation. Since the program's inception in 2003, 2,797 patients have received \$17,537,026 in free dental services. Again, COVID-19 had a significant impact on this program.

The **Martha Mordini Rukavina Loan Forgiveness Program** is funded by the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) to help dentists pay back educational loans if they are willing to practice in the Taconite Assistance Area of northeastern Minnesota for at least five years. This program started in 2009 and became a program of the Minnesota Dental Foundation in 2011. Since 2011, three dentists have completed the five-year requirements of the program and four dentists are still receiving financial assistance. Funds are available for more applicants.

The **Minnesota Mission of Mercy (MnMOM)** has had events in Mankato (2012 & 2014), Bemidji (2013), Duluth (2015 & 2024), Moorhead (2016), Minneapolis (2018), and St. Cloud (2022). In the eight events since the inception of the program in Minnesota, 57,322 free dental procedures valued at \$7.94 million in 11,331 patient encounters have been provided. The next event will be in 2026 in Rochester.

The **Retired Dentist Program** is a project for retired dentists who are no longer earning any income from dentistry which reimburse them for their license, professional liability insurance, CPR and CE in return for providing volunteer dentistry to the underserved. Retired dentists must provide at least 100 hours per year and receive no compensation. As of December 31, 2024, there were nine retired dentists in the program. Total expenditures for the program in 2024 were \$452 and \$400,146 in free dentistry was provided. Since the inception of the program in 2014, 22 retired dentists have participated and have provided \$3,720,902 in free dentistry.

The **Minnesota's Heroes Orthodontic Program** was initiated in 2015 to provide needed orthodontic care to children and spouses in Gold Star Families (families who have lost a family member in service to our country since 9/11). This program is in collaboration with Smiles Change Lives and the Minnesota Association of Orthodontists. Five kids have been treated through this program. The orthodontists provide the treatment for free and there have been no direct costs for this program.

The **Dedicated to Minnesota Dentists Loan Repayment for Service Program** provides loan repayment up to \$200,000 per individual if they practice in a rural Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for at least five years. This program is in collaboration with the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation and it provides the funding of the program. A total of ten dentists and \$2 million now have been utilized to provide dental services in rural HPSAs of Minnesota. The cities include Bigfork, Cook, Deerwood, Ely, International Falls, Montevideo, Mora, Tyler, Walker and Warroad. Funding is no longer available for this program.

The **Give Kids a Smile** program became a program of the Minnesota Dental Association in 2003 and was transferred to the Minnesota Dental Foundation in 2016. Solventum (3M Oral Care), the Minnesota Dental Association, the Minnesota Dental Foundation and several individual donors contributed funds for the media exposure and program management. Data for 2024 is noted above. Since the program's inception in Minnesota, over 86,500 children have received \$27.5 million worth of free dentistry.