



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



SERVING DES MOINES FOR OVER 105 YEARS

Letter from the Executive Director

Dental Connections is proud to say we have been serving the community for 105 years. This past year, we made strides to ensure that we will continue this work for years to come.

Our chief accomplishment in 2024 was the purchase of a new, state-of-the-art mobile dental unit. The mobile dental unit replaces an aging unit acquired in 2008. Our new unit will allow us to expand to geographic regions of the state experiencing Medicaid provider shortages. We will also reach more students who struggle to access dental care. We are grateful for the generous support of our community partners and funders for this fundraising effort!

We are also pleased to be updating our clinic with essential improvements like new flooring, electrical handpieces, and updated sterilization equipment. Like any professional dental clinic, providing patients with the most comfortable and up-to-date comprehensive dental care is one of the hallmarks of our organization.

Dental Connections is proud to participate in Iowa's statewide oral health coalition, Oral Health Iowa (OHI). Together with OHI participants, Dental Connections is advocating for increases to Iowa Medicaid reimbursement rates. Iowa Medicaid has not meaningfully increased its rates in over two decades, despite rising costs of doing business. Currently, Medicaid pays about \$0.29 cents on the dollar to Usual and Customary Rates. At Dental Connections, 70% of our patients have Medicaid insurance which makes reimbursement rates a critical priority.

We hope you will use your voice to encourage our state legislature to make a meaningful increase to Iowa's Medicaid rates this year! Doing so has been shown to increase patient access and provider coverage in neighboring states.

Finally, a huge thank you to our compassionate staff and Board of Directors for their steadfast commitment and dedication to our mission. Our team is the beating heart of our organization. I feel lucky to work alongside every person on our team.

Our 105-year history abounds with evidence of our positive impact on the community. As we look to the future, Dental Connections remains true to its North Star: to ensure access to oral healthcare for all.



Carly Ross

Carly Ross
Executive Director

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SMILES

Letter from the Dental Director

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with pride as we look at the strides we have made in expanding the impact of our mission: to provide equitable access to quality oral healthcare for all. We have not only grown in size and reach but have also strengthened the systems and culture that allow us to serve our community. Through careful strategic planning and dedication, we expanded our patient base, prioritized rural outreach, and worked to improve access to care for emergency patients experiencing dental pain.

A key area of focus this year was the enhancement of our internal systems. We implemented new patient management software, allowing us to streamline appointments, reduce wait times, and provide more efficient, patient-centered communications and care. This upgrade ensures that our team has the tools they need to provide the highest level of care and service.

At the heart of our success is the culture we have nurtured within our organization. From the front desk to the dental chair, everyone at Dental Connections shares a deep commitment to our mission and values. Each day we are faced with unique challenges and barriers to care that are faced with perseverance, patience, and positivity. This team's dedication to our patients is truly unparalleled.

As we look to the year ahead, we are excited to expand our reach even further, enhance our programs, and continue to find innovative ways to serve those who need us most. Our new Mobile Dental Clinic will soon be expanding to additional schools, and we're exploring new partnerships and initiatives to ensure that access to compassionate, patient centered care is accessible to all members of our community.



Riley Cholewa DDS

Riley Cholewa, DDS
Dental Director

FISCAL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

2024 was an impactful year for Dental Connections! The need for oral health services for underserved and vulnerable children and families in our community continued to grow. Oral health needs remained complex and extensive. We rose to meet these needs by improving efficiencies in our clinical operations including the implementation of a new patient management system and by fully staffing our clinical team of providers. These efforts allowed us to increase the number of patients we saw while ensuring consistent quality of care. This past year, Dental Connections expanded its emergency care services. We are currently seeing 100 – 150 emergency patients each month.

Access to oral health remains a challenge to many people in our community and across the state. Around 70% of our patients rely on state insurance (Medicaid) to pay their dental expenses. In addition, the number of uninsured patients served by Dental Connections doubled in the past year, in part due to the Medicaid unwinding (the expiration of the continuous enrollment condition) after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Clinical Highlights



Expanded care of emergency patients on a sit and wait basis. Served 100 – 150 emergency patients monthly.



Replaced our dental delivery units which increased provider efficiency and quality of care to patients.



Transitioned to a new patient management system to increase information capabilities and streamline clinical processes.



Purchased a new, state-of-the-art mobile dental unit through a community-supported fundraising effort.



Launched a new, enhanced website and developed new marketing materials for patients and partners.



Fully staffed our clinical team with a total of 9 dentists and 40 total staff.

OUR IMPACT:

15,498 PATIENTS

13,803 CHILDREN

\$157,000 IN DONATED CARE THROUGH THE CHARITABLE CARE PROGRAM.

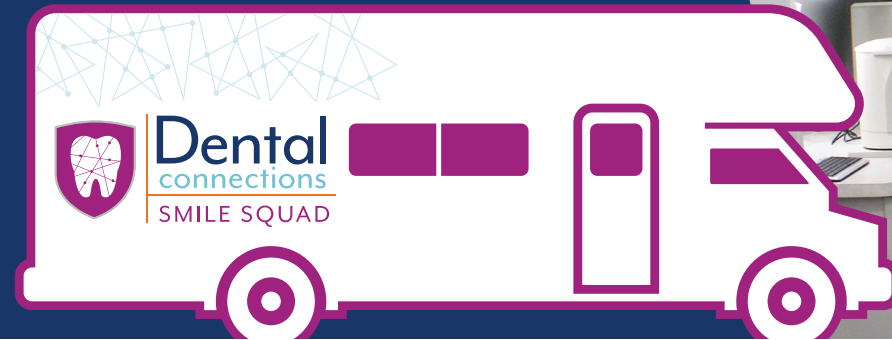


SMILE SQUAD MOBILE DENTAL CLINIC

The Smile Squad mobile dentistry program plays an important role in serving students in central Iowa. The Smile Squad visits 58 schools in eight districts, providing vital oral health care to underserved children who might not otherwise see a dentist on a regular basis. In collaboration with school nurses who identify students in need of services, the Smile Squad eliminates barriers to access to care. In addition to comprehensive care on the mobile dental units, the Smile Squad also provides screenings and fluoride treatments to preschoolers and third and eighth grade students.

During the summer months, the mobile dental program keeps busy through community partnerships providing critical outreach and care to the following organizations:

- Iowa Homeless Youth Shelter
- House of Mercy
- Prairie Meadows Racetrack seasonal workers through the Iowa Horseman's Benevolent & Protective Association
- Lighthouse Transitional Living Program
- Anawim Housing
- Orchard Place



Smile Squad Story

“WITHOUT THE SMILE SQUAD, THIS CHILD WOULD HAVE HAD TO FUNCTION WITH A HALF TOOTH FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.”

A 2nd grade student was seen by the Smile Squad with a broken front, permanent tooth. The tooth had been injured months before we came to the school, but unfortunately, his family didn't have the resources to treat the tooth. Without the Smile Squad, this child would have had to function with a half tooth for the foreseeable future. The school staff worked with a translator to explain the Smile Squad program to the family so they could take advantage of our services. Because of the Smile Squad, this child has a beautifully restored front tooth that will last him for many years. The Smile Squad's intervention helped alleviate the patient's discomfort, improve his speech and function and restore his confidence!





INTRODUCING OUR NEW MOBILE DENTAL UNIT

In 2023, a campaign was launched to purchase a new mobile dental unit for the Smile Squad school-based dental program. This mobile unit would replace one of our existing units which was over 20 years old. We were gratified by the support of our community to secure funding for the effort. We are proud to share that the new mobile dental unit was delivered and unveiled in early September 2024! We have begun plans to expand the geographic reach of our mobile units to even more underserved Iowans.

Thank you to the generous donors which made our dream a reality!

ACT Corporation
 Anonymous Donor
 Carlson Family Foundation
 Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation
 DentaQuest
 Dr. Paul & Mrs. Jean Groben
 EMC Insurance
 Fareway
 First Interstate Bank

GreenState Foundation
 Gregory E. & Andrea R Abel Foundation
 Iowa Dental Foundation
 Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino
 Principal Foundation
 Professional Solutions
 SunLife
 The Noble Foundation
 Variety, the Children's Charity

FINANCIALS FISCAL YEAR 2024

FINANCIAL DATA		
	FY 2024	FY 2023
REVENUE	\$3,741,613	\$2,870,642
EXPENSES		
Program Services	\$3,029,583	\$2,873,845
Management & General	\$341,983	\$286,042
Fundraising	\$126,902	\$100,340
Total Expenses	\$3,498,468	\$3,260,227
NET ASSETS		
Change in Net Assets	\$243,145	(\$389,585)
Beginning Net Assets	\$3,463,401	\$3,852,986
Ending Net Assets	\$3,706,546	\$3,463,401

STAFF & LEADERSHIP

An organization can't succeed without a committed staff and a supportive Board of Directors. Dental Connections is fortunate to have a team who truly embodies the mission of the organization.

Leadership

Carly Ross
Executive Director

Courtney Wolterman, RDH
Director of Community Programs

Kathy Salisbury
Director of Marketing and Development

Riley Cholewa, DDS
Dental Director

Dentists

Riley Cholewa, DDS (Dental Director)

Anantha Raghudri, DDS

Riti Agarwal, DDS

Katie Spencer, DDS

Courtney Bohn, DDS

Audrey Uridil, DDS

James Cholewa, DDS

Kimberly Zimmerman, DDS

Brandi Mace, DDS

Board of Directors

Kourtney Kirkpatrick
Board Chair

Maggie Ramold

Steven Neville, DDS

Jim Hoyt
Vice Chair

Ali Pourian, DDS

Jill Crosser

Emily Dobbins

Jake Oeth

Michael Broderick
Treasurer

Amra Beganovic

"Dental Connections is dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families by providing quality oral health services regardless of income or insurance status. It is inspiring to see the profound impact receiving these services makes on our patients."

– Kourtney Kirkpatrick

FY 2023-2024 Donors

Dental Connections cannot fulfill its mission without the support of our generous donors. Thank you for helping us build a community of smiles!

\$100,000 and Up

United Way of Central Iowa
Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation

\$30,000 to \$50,000

Gregory E. & Andrea R. Abel Foundation
HRJ Consulting
Immanuel Vision Foundation
Iowa Dental Association
Polk County Early Childhood
Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino
Variety - the Children's Charity

\$10,000 to \$25,000

Birdies For Charity
(Principal Golf Classic)
Carlson Family Foundation
Dentaquest
First Interstate Bank
GreenState Credit Union
Jean & Paul Groben
Michael Broderick
Principal Financial Group
Professional Solutions
Insurance company
Ralph & Sylvia Green Foundation
The Noble Foundation

\$5,000 to \$10,000

Artech Solutions Inc.
EMC Insurance Foundation
Fareway
Henry Schein Cares
Polk County Board of Supervisors
Roxanne & James Conlin Fund

\$1,000 to \$5,000

ACT Corporation
Alex Romp
Ali Pourian, DDS
American Academy of Pediatric
Dentistry Foundation
Bridget Drendel
Farmers State Bank
Michael Hipp, DDS

Nataliya Boychenko-Stone
QuikTrip Corporation

\$500 to \$1,000

BrownWinick Law Firm
Bruce D. Thorsen
ConnectifyHR
Craig & Courtney Wolterman
Kourtney Kirkpatrick
Patterson Dental
Shannon Sobek
Sheila Nelson
Steven Rabadeaux, DDS

Up to \$500

Aaron Kile
Alice Van Lew Revocable Trust
Allison Lindner
Amy Howells
Anna Cramer
Anne Johnson
Beth Jones
Blake Harms
Brett Wolf
Brian Jacobs
Carla Hetlet
Christina Snyder
Ciarra Doty
Clive Swanepoel
Dana Hanson
Deborah Jean Roberts
Drew Johnson
Emily Dobbins
Eric Fleharty
Greg Baker
Hayley Rauzi
Heather Streeter
Isaac Clair, DDS
James Cholewa, DDS
Jason Oeth
Jenny Fields
Jesse Lipson
Jill Feilmeier

Jim Hoyt
John Maahs
Joseph Risko
Kate Cunningham
Kathy Salisbury
Katy & Sean Duffy
Kennedy Bollmeyer
Kevin & Mary Krause Family
Charitable Fund
Laura Thako
Linda Gobberdiel
Luke Stadler
Lynn Malik
Madeline Ritter, DDS
Maggie Hackfort
Maggie Mae Ramold
Mari Carmen
Caballero Beganovic
Marsha Mills
Mary Hein
Michael Hoss
Mitch Smith
Molly Veenstra
Nicole Miller
Paul Fienup
Paula K. Motz-Lucas
Peggy Degnan
Richard Cacciatore
Robert Callahan
Ryan Riley
Sam Hutchisson
Sarah Terlouw
Scott & Anne Johnson
Sean Stender
Sharon Vickery
Suzie Pritchett
Tabitha Meyers
Tana Michelle Darling
Teresa Peterson
Terry Hernandez
Therese & Mitch Moore
Thomas Jacobs
Will Cook



WHAT'S AHEAD

Dental Connections will continue its mission to provide equitable access to quality oral health care for all. Plans are being made for upgrades to our clinic, expansion of services and innovative new programming to fulfill our mission and provide state-of-the-art care to our patients.

Initiatives we are planning for FY 2024 include:

- Upgrading clinic by purchasing electric handpieces and isolation vacuum systems
- Installation of new flooring throughout the Main Clinic
- Updating sterilization area by purchasing a new instrument washer and replacing worn cabinetry
- Hosting Creighton University College of Dentistry fourth-year dental students for rotations

THANK
YOU
FOR
SUPPORTING
DENTAL
CONNECTIONS!



Building a community of smiles.

1111 9th Street, Suite 190 | Des Moines, IA 50314 | 515.244.9136 | DentalConnections.org

 [@DentalConnections515](https://www.instagram.com/DentalConnections515)  [/Dental515](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Dental515)  [/Dental515](https://www.facebook.com/Dental515)