



Photo by Cassie Stone

Going the Extra Smile

Bleeding gums, impacted teeth, and rotting teeth are routine matters for children... Children get used to feeling constant pain. They go to sleep with it. They go to school with it. Children live for months with pain that grown-ups find unendurable. The gradual attrition of accepted pain erodes their energy and aspirations. *Jonathan Kozol, 1991*

The Mobile Dental Clinic has reduced the number of hours children are out of school for dental related visits.



Photo by Cassie Stone

Going the Extra Smile

In North Carolina, there are 4.4 dentists per 10,000 patients, compared to the national rate of 6.0 dentists. Thus, there are insufficient dentists to serve the insured population, let alone low-income Medicaid or uninsured populations. N.C. has one of the lowest rates of dentist who accept Medicaid in the country because dentists lose money when treating Medicaid patients. In addition, dentists are concerned with the high rate of broken appointments and poor patient adherence among Medicaid recipients. *UNC Sheps Center for Health, 2005*

The WPHDC has improved access to care, but is still designated as an underserved county.

Going the Extra Smile



Photo by Cassie Stone

Children who learn proper oral hygiene can expect to keep their teeth for a lifetime. However, studies indicate that today's adults have the highest rate of periodontal disease and need to do more to maintain good oral health.

- Older people have three times more tooth decay than children
- Almost one of four people over age 65 have lost all of their teeth

Regular dental check-up including application of fluoride are scheduled every 6 months starting at age 1. We encourage parents to establish a dental home with us as soon as the first tooth appears. We have been more successful when we are treating an older sidling.

Going the Extra Smile



More older people are keeping their natural teeth than ever before. However, among those aged 65 years and over there are sharp differences by income, with those in poverty twice as likely as those with higher incomes to have lost all their teeth.

- One-third of adults aged 65 years and over have untreated dental caries; slightly over 40 percent have periodontal disease.
- Many older Americans take medications for chronic conditions that have side effects detrimental to their oral health. These include antihistamines, diuretics, and antidepressants.

The oldest patient in the Adult Clinic with natural teeth is 101. She comes every 6 months for her cleaning.

Going the Extra Smile

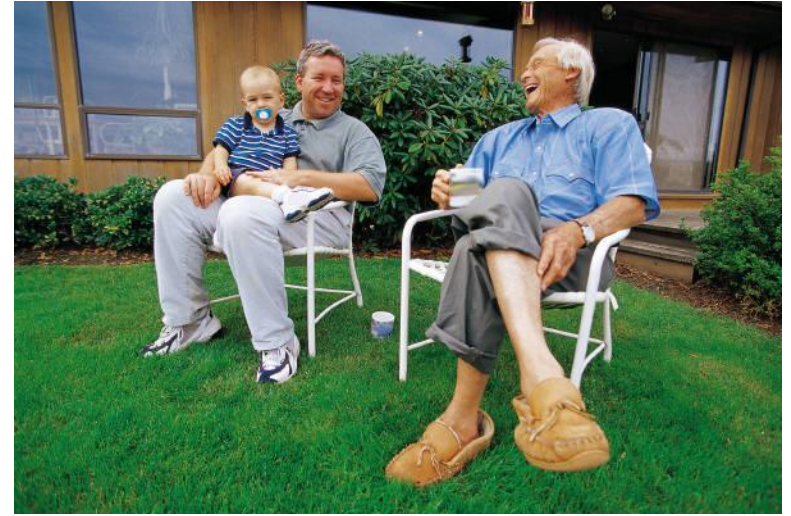


According to the Center for Disease control and Prevention, providing care for older persons is often more complex than dental care for younger adults. Considering that caries and periodontal diseases are cumulative, older persons endure the consequences of their oral health experience from earlier years, such as missing teeth, large fillings, and the loss of tooth support.

Many patients are medically compromised requiring additional attention to help them maintain good oral health, but we try to treat everyone in our facility.

We have patients from Assisted Living and Extended Care Facilities. The Mobile Clinic provides on-site care at one of the local nursing home facilities.

Going the Extra Smile



Children are seen by appointment on a sliding fee scale, and both Medicaid and Health Choice are accepted. A mobile clinic travels to area schools and removes transportation barriers for these patients.

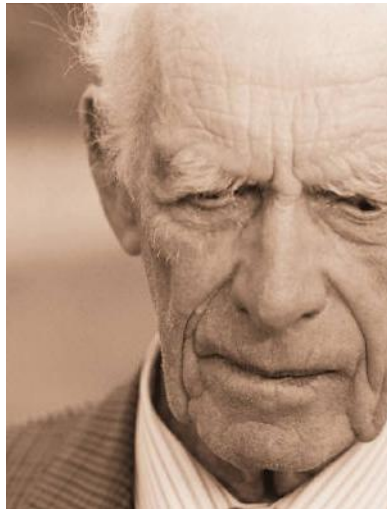
Because over a third of the homes in Wilkes County rely on well water, which does not contain fluoride, these children represent the third generation of families without access to care. An adult clinic offers adults an opportunity for the working poor to be seen.

Dental emergencies send hundreds of patients to the emergency department each year.

An open emergency clinic is held once a week to reduce the number of ED visits.



Going the Extra Smile



Although oral health problems are not usually associated with death, oral cancers result in nearly 8,000 deaths each year, and more than half of these deaths occur among persons 65 years of age and older. As with other cancers, survival improves when the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage. Because patients with an early stage of oral cancer rarely have pain or other symptoms, detecting an oral cancer is primarily dependent upon a comprehensive oral cancer examination. -*Center for Disease Control and Prevention*

Unfortunately, we have been involved in the diagnosis of some terminal oral cancers.

Going the Extra Smile



Photo by Cassie Stone

Wilkes Public Health Dental Clinic has brought many smiles to the children of Wilkes County.

- **Increased the number of dentists providing care.**
- **Reduced the decay rate through prevention.**
- **Increased the children with a dental home through education and access.**
- **Provided a positive environment that makes the children want to come to the dentist.**
- **Emergred as a dental model that the community is proud of.**