

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 2,000 People Receive Care at ISDS Foundation Mission of Mercy

Bloomington, IL – More than 2,000 children and adults received necessary dental care during the Illinois State Dental Society Foundation’s Mission of Mercy event. “Throughout the course of this two-day access to dental care opportunity, our volunteers provided upwards of 2,000 extractions, 1,200 restorative treatments, including fillings, root canals, crowns, and partials. The treatment delivered is valued at over a \$1 million,” said Dr. Mark Humenik.

More than 1,000 volunteer dentists, dental hygienists and assistants, dental students, and community members from across the state traveled to the Interstate Center to donate their time and skills to provide the completely free dental care.

“This weekend we have witnessed many extraordinary circumstances in which people have lost their jobs, their dental insurance, or have simply had to deal with many difficult setbacks. We’ve had the opportunity to get to know many, many in need. We had one woman who received a partial today and when she saw her smile she began sobbing because, as she said, ‘I can finally go get a job,’” said Mission of Mercy Co-Chair Dr. Brad Barnes.

Certainly, the ISDS Foundation’s Mission of Mercy has called attention the serious problem that many Illinois citizens have in accessing dental care, but charity is not the foundation for a properly working healthcare system. For the past two-and-a-half years, the Illinois State Dental Society has been urging the Illinois Legislature and the governor to consider a series of bills collectively known as Bridge to Healthy Smiles. These bills were introduced as part of ISDS efforts to address the access to dental care problem that patients covered by the state’s programs experience routinely.

“We were honored to have Governor Pat Quinn tour the Mission and sign into law legislation that will enable dentists to provide care to Medicaid patients in public clinics without the hassle of enrolling in the Medicaid system. This is certainly a step in the right direction,” said ISDS President Dr. Larry Osborne.

“We are hopeful that our Mission of Mercy has further educated state leaders on the critical need to address the Medicaid funding crisis. Many of the patients that we saw over the past two days are eligible to be covered by state public assistance programs like Medicaid, KidCare or Allkids. If these programs were properly funded by state government, at least to a level where private practicing dentists could cover the costs they incur to provide the care, we would not need events like Mission of Mercy,” he added.

“Our opening day of this Mission of Mercy saw more patients than any other MOM event in the country. We believe it was also the best in the country thanks to the thousands of volunteer hours, tens of thousands of dollars in donations, and the commitment of hundreds of volunteers who came to Bloomington and worked tirelessly to ensure that those most in need would receive dental care. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my hometown community of Bloomington/Normal, without the generosity of the many restaurants, local businesses, public officials, and local public services, and many volunteers we could not have had the tremendously successful event that we did,” emphasized IMOM Co-Chair Dr. Brad Barnes.

For more information visit www.ISDS.org.

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