

# mission of mercy



A grateful patient clutches the hand of Dr. Larry Black.



Patients stood in line for hours.

## 2014 Mission of Mercy: “Something Good” for People in Need



Nearly 1,200 MDA members, dental staff, family members, friends and others volunteered at this year's Michigan Mission of Mercy, which took place May 30 and 31 on the campus of Ferris State University in Big Rapids.

The MOM volunteers treated 858 patients, many of whom needed extensive treatment as a result of years of dental neglect. More than 6,000 procedures were provided, with \$885,072 in total treatment, or about \$1,032 per person. About half of all procedures were for extensive

Putting on an event as massive as a Mission of Mercy is truly an awesome accomplishment. It takes skillful planning, sharp organization, large amounts of money, volunteers — hundreds of volunteers — plus recruitment of patients, event publicity, and so much more.

As Harris said, "After you've experienced a MOM, there's never any doubt that all the effort really is worth it. And if you're a MOM volunteer, chances are there's one thought going through your mind as you drive home: *When's the next one?*"

- *"You're an angel from God! I'm very thankful and grateful for you and your time. Your help was beautiful and amazing! Thank you a bunch. May you get many blessings from your awesome deed. You broke the fear from me!"*

The 2014 Michigan Mission of Mercy was a joint program of the MDA and the MDA Foundation, the MDA's charitable arm. This year's MOM was the second Michigan Mission of Mercy to be held. Last year's event took place at Saginaw Valley State University. The total cost of the



View of the clinic during a busy time.



Delta Dental volunteers posed for a group portrait.

treatments, such as oral surgery and restorative care.

Dr. Steve Harris, of Farmington, chaired the MOM event for the second straight year.

"Though fewer individuals were seen compared to last year, more came back the next day and received more comprehensive care," Harris said. "Our services delivered exceeded last year's MOM. And again we had a wonderful group of volunteers to help these folks in desperate need of care and who helped alleviate the human suffering we saw here over the two days."

Harris said patients also received information about the importance of daily oral hygiene, a healthy diet, and routine preventive care.

Patients were very grateful. Here are just a few of the comments heard from patients at the MOM:

- *"I'm glad I came! Everyone was so kind to me."*
- *"You're doing a wonderful thing! Everyone was very pleasant and kind. Thanks to you all! Bless you!"*
- *"We prayed to be able to get dental care and today we did! Thank God! Thank you!"*
- *"I want to thank all the volunteers. I'm so very grateful for your kind hearts. Thanks for allowing God to use you to be a blessing to those of us in need."*
- *"Thank you! I truly could not afford the extraction I had today that has been infected for a year. You are all life savers!"*

MOM totaled about \$180,000, and was covered by grants, private contributions, donations of dental supplies, meals and snacks, tables and chairs, office supplies and other items. Major sponsors include Delta Dental — the largest donor, contributing \$40,000 — plus Benco Dental, Henry Schein Dental, the Mecosta County Community Foundation, the Michigan Department of Community Health, Patterson Dental, and many others. A list of contributors appears on these pages.

Seeing an event first-hand like this makes a big impression on policy-makers, and several prominent public officials visited the MOM. They included James Haveman, di-

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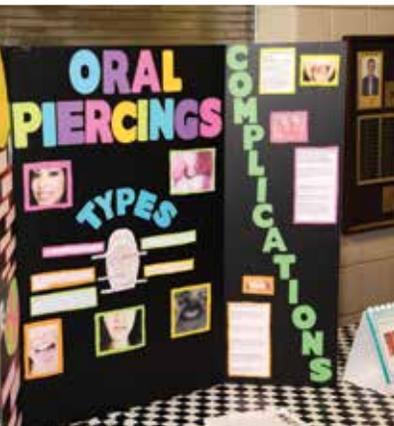
MDA CEO/Executive Director Karen Burgess (right) joined other volunteers and helped distribute snacks from the Salvation Army to patients waiting in line.



Drs. Paul Korte, Colette Smiley and Scott Hodges with MDA staffer Andrea Sundermann.



A patient stops by the routing desk to learn his next stop in the treatment process.



Oral health posters helped with patient education.



Many dental students assisted during the MOM, under the watchful eye of dentists.



Scott Ward (left) of Ward Dental Lab served as lab lead.



Central Supply volunteers helped keep things running smoothly.

rector of the Michigan Department of Community Health; Sen. Darwin Booher (R-Evart), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee; Sen. Judy Emmons (R-Sheridan), a member of the Senate Health Policy committee; Rep. Al Pscholka (R-Stevensville), a member of the House Appropriations Committee; and Mary Judnich, regional director for U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow.

Prior to the event, the MDA worked with the Mecosta Community Foundation and other groups to help spread the word that the MOM was coming and to ensure a steady stream of patients. Afterward, the MDA continued to tell the MOM story through several news releases, Twitter posts and media events. The association also sent a

follow-up opinion piece to newspapers statewide, written by MDA President Dr. Marty Makowski.

Makowski was one of many MDA members who served as a MOM volunteer. He noted that on average, Michigan dental offices each provide more than \$60,000 in charitable care to patients each year. But, Makowski said, events such as the MOM are able to draw more attention from the public, media and legislators.

“Volunteerism and donated treatment is really dentistry’s untold story,” Makowski said. “Every dental office has stories to tell about the free care they provide. But when people witness an event like this, they really understand the level of care that we as a profession are providing to people.”

The Mission of Mercy consisted of a set-up day, two days of actual patient care, and a tear-down day. On the set-up day trucks full of equipment and supplies had to be unloaded. The contents of each truck had to be checked off, counted, organized, and put in place. Clinic, sterilization, lab and dental education areas all had to be put together, with volunteers coordinated and assigned to every task.

Actual patient care began on Friday, May 30. Patients lined up outside the Ewingleben Sports Complex, with several there since the previous day. MOM volunteers distributed water and snacks to patients in line. The doors opened at 6 a.m. as the first group of patients entered the patient registration area. Patient

## 2014 Mission of Mercy Donor List

The Michigan Dental Association Foundation and the Michigan Dental Association would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous contributions toward the 2014 Michigan Mission of Mercy.

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MDA Foundation Secretary Dr. Grace Curcuru (left) reviews X-rays with a patient.



On-the-spot X-rays mean a quicker diagnosis.



MDA President Dr. Marty Makowski treats an apprehensive young patient.



Among the volunteers was Chris Farrell (left), oral health director for the state of Michigan.



Volunteers in the sterilization area kept busy.



Chris Wilson of the MDA staff assisted with patient education.



Use of the CEREC machine is demonstrated by Patterson's Joe Vaughn.

registration forms were filled out and health histories obtained for all patients, who also received patient education. Then, patients entered the medical triage area, which was needed to identify those individuals who couldn't be treated due to medically compromising conditions (such as extremely high blood pressure, untreated diabetes, etc.).

Next, patients entered the dental triage area, where they were screened to establish their chief complaint or most urgent need. Treatment for infection and pain is the top priority at a MOM, followed by restorations, treatment partials, and cleaning. Patients were then treated in one of six clinic areas: oral surgery, restorative, endodontic, pediatric, prosthodontic,

and hygiene. On-site sterilization, radiograph and dental supply areas supported treating dentists and staff.

Following treatment, patients were directed to the on-campus pharmacy, which provided antibiotics and non-narcotic pain medication prescribed by the treating dentist, at no charge to the patient. Prescriptions for narcotics were given to patients to take to local pharmacies, to be paid for by the MOM. Finally, all patients were given an exit interview, including additional post-op instructions if needed and an oral health kit to take home, as well as information on services and clinics throughout Michigan where patients can seek care.

The days were long for the volunteers — 12 hours each day — but the

satisfaction was great. All meals were provided for the volunteers, many of whom were staying overnight in local hotels or on campus at Ferris State facilities at their own expense.

Yes, it was hard work. But the camaraderie was great, and the labor itself was rewarding and satisfying. Nobody complained. Hundreds of people left the campus of Ferris State healthier, and happier.

So, after two full, exhausting days, one thing was abundantly clear: The 2014 Mission of Mercy was definitely "something good" for people in need — and maybe, for the people who helped them, too. ♦

*(Photos by Jim Keating)*

# Fixing One Smile at a Time

By Lonnie Allen

Reprinted with permission from the *Big Rapids Pioneer*, May 31, 2014

**D**wane Dallas fought hard to hold back his tears Friday morning after hearing a volunteer dentist tell him he would no longer be embarrassed to smile.

Dallas, 35, of Stanwood, waited 36 hours to be seen at the Mission of Mercy free dental clinic at Ewingleben Sports Complex on Ferris State University's campus.

"I almost cried when he gave me the news that they would get everything done I wanted," Dallas said. "I can hardly contain my tears. I have been always ashamed to show my front teeth, but now I will be able to smile again."

The Mission of Mercy event, which will conclude today, has approximately 1,200 volunteers providing free dental care to any who show up.

"We don't have a requirement to be seen," said Scott Hodges, Mission of Mercy dental chair. "We have people from all over the state here all in need of dental care."

As Dallas maneuvered around the different dental stations inside the Ewingleben Sports Complex, it became clear to him how serious his tooth decay had become.

"I guess I'm going to visit every station in here," Dallas said. "The dentist said there is a lot of work to be done."

After X-rays, he was off to have an impression made of his teeth. The impression of the upper arches of his mouth were used to make his replacement teeth, which took approximately eight hours to complete.

"This process of making replacement teeth and partials usually takes about two weeks, but here we are able to expedite the entire process," Hodges said, "We can do this because we have all the equipment here to finish the process. Normally a dentist would have to send out the impression to a lab for them to make the teeth. Dallas is very blessed he was here early enough so we will be able to have his work finished today."

As a volunteer nurse cleaned up around Dallas' mouth, he was relieved this part of the process was over.

"That part wasn't fun because of an exposed nerve in my back molar," Dallas said. "It was uncomfortable because the mold was cold."

The next stop for Dallas was extractions, where five of his front decayed teeth were removed. As the dentist injected his gums with

the numbing agent to prepare for the extractions, he noticed another tooth that also should be removed.

"There is another top left tooth that should also be removed," said Vince Benivegna, a volunteer dentist from Lansing. "We need to check with the lab to notify them of the other removal before moving forward. The tooth is in very poor condition and nerves are exposed. It really needs to be removed."

While Dallas was having his decayed teeth removed, Karen McNally, of LeRoy, and her two children, 6-year-old Zoe and 5-year-old Zach were being guided to the pediatric dental area.

McNally was in line at 4 a.m. and her husband brought the children down when the doors to the clinic opened at 6 a.m. She said it took them 45 minutes to get inside and start the process that she called "a blessing."

"Zach is going to have some X-rays done," McNally said. "Zoe will be getting a filling and perhaps one of her baby teeth removed. It is so hard to keep up with dental cost and with bills and other things this clinic is a big blessing for us."

Dallas and McNally were among approximately 600 people who were in line early Friday morning waiting for the clinic doors to open. Salvation Army and Americorps volunteers offered fresh fruit and water to people waiting to be seen by dentists. Officers from Ferris and the Mecosta County Sheriff's Office were on hand to direct traffic and keep the line orderly with Mission of Mercy volunteers.

By mid-afternoon, people who stood in line to get into the clinic were finishing up their procedures and were escorted one by one by volunteers to have their exit interview. Some walked with cold compresses on their cheeks, others with their mouths full of gauze, while most left with a good cleaning. No matter what procedure was done, each person appeared to be full of gratitude at their exit interview.



(Photo: Big Rapids Pioneer)

**Sincere gratitude**—MOM volunteer Dr. Howard Hamerink receives thanks from patient Dwane Dallas. Dallas was so grateful, he returned the next day to volunteer at the MOM event.

Patients who had minor surgeries were given post-operative evaluations before final check out, often with a stop by the pharmacy station set up to dispense any medications for after-treatment needs.

At Dallas' exit interview, a volunteer discussed his post-op treatment instructions and asked him several survey questions that Mission of Mercy officials use to understand the scope of treatments done on individuals during their visit to the clinic, Hodges said.

At checkout, Dallas was informed he needed to get back in line to finish his treatment. He was pleased with the work he already had done and understood why he would be required to go back through the line.

"They are moving so many people through here and I need to wait an hour for the swelling to go down to finish cleaning my bottom teeth," Dallas said. "I don't mind waiting. I am just glad they were able to help me today."

By 3 p.m. on Friday, Dallas was finished with each procedure, which totaled more than \$2,600.

A dentist was fitting Dallas' partials when a nurse handed him a mirror. He refused to look at himself until he got home.

"I don't want to look at my teeth until I am alone," Dallas said. "That way, no one will see me cry. What these people have done here today is wonderful. I am grateful for all their hard work."

**Copper Level – \$1 - \$499**

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would like to thank Delta Dental Foundation for  
its \$40,000 Platinum Donation to the  
2014 Michigan Mission of Mercy.

This generous contribution, and that of many other  
donors, made it possible to provide treatment to hundreds  
of individuals in need.

Thank you, Delta Dental Foundation!

