



For Immediate Release

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HealthLink Dental Clinic reopens in wake of pandemic
Dental Services for low-wage-earning adults offered at no charge.

SOUTHAMPTON, Pa. (July 13, 2020) – Whether relieving toothache or putting the polishing touches to make a smile sparkle, HealthLink Dental Clinic is again open for those in need of their services. Since 2001, HealthLink has offered free dental services to low-wage-earning adults and military veterans age 18 and older in Bucks and Montgomery Counties who are without dental insurance. This model has proven successful in the past and there is no question it will again. The challenge is matching time and talent with today’s need.

Doug Rouff is a retired dentist who volunteers at HealthLink to help provide vital services to patients who might otherwise go without. He sees this as one way he can help the world around him. “It’s about using my talents, experience and skills to help those who need them,” says Rouff of his HealthLink volunteer service.

Since moving to Doylestown from Michigan where he was in private practice for 35 years, Rouff finds HealthLink to be a welcoming practice where he can serve others at his own pace, on his own schedule. “The staff at HealthLink does an unbelievable job, and [they] are super organized. Inside, it’s a very modern facility with fine equipment, and the patients are treated really well,” Rouff explains. “I’m proud to say I have a part to play in meeting their community service goals.”

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In 2017 the National Association of Dental Plans reported an estimated 74 million Americans did not have dental health insurance coverage. Medicare provides health insurance for those aged 65 and older, but not dental insurance coverage. Individuals may also elect to buy dental insurance through supplemental Medicare Advantage plans offering it.

Some individuals covered under Medicaid may or may not have access to dental coverage. Yet the fact is that COVID-19 has struck another blow to people who just don't have money to pay for dental services.

While states are required to provide dental and health care coverage to income qualifying children, coverage for adults is less clear-cut. In fact, states are not required to extend dental care coverage to income qualified adults. HealthLink continues to enlist experienced, well respected dentists to volunteer, apply for grants, invite corporate partnerships, and open doors for sponsorship. Kindness, respect, and quality care are HealthLink hallmarks.

"Dentistry is not an inexpensive service and the people at HealthLink are finding ways to provide an opportunity for people to receive care," Rouff says. "When you have a private practice career you have to make money, pay your staff, and keep the office running smoothly. Now that I'm retired, engaging in the volunteer opportunities has been extremely satisfying," he explains. "It keeps me busy and I really do feel like I am making a difference to others."

Dental services at HealthLink include routine cleanings, X-rays, fillings, root canals, and crowns. Only patients with root canal procedures completed at HealthLink are eligible for crown treatment.

Phyllis Detwiler, another HealthLink volunteer dentist, believes in HealthLink's mission of supporting initiatives that better the lives of those who otherwise couldn't afford to have

routine or higher level care services performed. “I believe in their mission to supply dental care to low-income people who do not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid. It is [otherwise] a tremendous expense,” she states.

When dental health care is neglected or must be cut altogether because of its cost, the risk for developing more serious health conditions and problems dramatically increases. Gum disease and recession, and tooth loss may be directly linked to poor oral hygiene. Poor oral hygiene is also being linked to such serious conditions as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

Detwiler was introduced to HealthLink through an oral surgeon friend about two years ago. “Recruiting enough service providers to meet appointment needs can be a big challenge, and it’s a great opportunity for those of us who are retired and must maintain state licenses to practice, as well as for dentists who can find a little spare time to offer their expertise to those in need.,” she says. “Surprisingly, awareness of the free services HealthLink has available is also a challenge. It’s important to get the word out.”

Since the coronavirus pandemic closed most if not all dental practices for a period of time, HealthLink was closed from March 15 to June 12, The dental practice is now open on an “appointment only” basis. The staff is committed to be fully operational as soon as humanly possible. “I will be happy when the facility can increase its current operation. I know there are real challenges because COVID-19 precautions are extensive. The HealthLink staff is working diligently to assure they satisfy all requirements and offer a safe experience for clients,” Detwiler says.

Rouff feels he’s learned a lot since beginning to volunteer at HealthLink. “You have your preconceived notions of how things are going to be. There are a lot of people who are working and don’t make a lot of money or don’t have dental coverage. It’s been very eye-opening to me,” he concludes.

About HealthLink Dental Clinic

Founded by Eugene Jackson nearly 20 years ago, HealthLink Dental Clinic's mission is to "bridge the gap" and provide free dental services for people age 18 and older who cannot afford it. All patients who qualify receive a first appointment with X-Rays in order to determine the best treatment plan.

With the motto "Spreading Smiles Across the Miles," the clinic provides dental care and education for better at-home oral hygiene to patients from Bucks and Montgomery Counties. HealthLink offers additional resource links to agencies and organizations offering medical and behavioral health services, housing, food assistance, and career guidance.

With excellent facilities located at 1775 Street Road in Southampton, Pa., HealthLink is working to increase patient volume, find more volunteer dentists, add to its growing number of sponsors and donors, and increase its volunteer roster. To learn more and/or offer assistance, visit healthlinkdental.org or call 215.364.4247.

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