

ACCESS *update*

Spring 2009



Natick general dentist Peter Delli Colli, DMD, accepts the 2009 Deborah Blumer Community Health Leader Award for his work within the Natick community.

Natick Dentist Honored for *Supporting Smiles*

Natick general dentist Peter Delli Colli, DMD, recently received the 2009 Deborah Blumer Community Health Leader Award in tribute to his work within the Natick community. The MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation, an independent public philanthropy that is dedicated to serving the health needs of the MetroWest region of Massachusetts, presents the award to an individual for outstanding leadership in advancing the health of the community. The Massachusetts Dental Society nominated Dr. Delli Colli for the honor.

Dr. Delli Colli received the award due to his work with the Natick Service Council's *Supporting Smiles* Program, which assists low-income Natick residents in receiving dental care that they might otherwise go without. Now in its 47th year, the Natick Service Council is a charitable, community-based, nonprofit organization serving the Natick community. The Council provides a wide range of services and charitable activities for the economically disadvantaged.

Now entering its second year, the *Supporting Smiles* Program encourages all Natick dentists to sign up and become MassHealth providers. In addition, dentists agree to charge reduced fees for services through a cost-sharing program for patients who don't qualify for MassHealth or who lack private dental insurance. When the program began in 2007, Dr. Delli Colli personally called his fellow dentists in Natick to ask them to join the program.

"With this economy, many adults are without dental care," says Dr. Delli Colli. "For the coming year, we are trying to increase dental access for all Natick residents, especially our adult population. [The *Supporting Smiles* Program] now has a dozen dentists providing care for more than 75 patients."

The program employs a full-time social worker to assist patients with making dental appointments, answer questions, and provide the necessary follow-up. For those adults who do not have transportation, a van and driver are provided to ensure that the patients arrive at their appointments on time. Dr. Delli Colli notes that broken or missed appointments are almost entirely nonexistent.

"I was honored to be nominated by the Massachusetts Dental Society for the 2009 Deborah Blumer Community Health Leader Award," adds Dr. Delli Colli. "I am pleased to know how important the *Supporting Smiles* Program has been to these patients and also to the Natick community."

For more information on the *Supporting Smiles* Program, contact the Natick Service Council at (508) 655-1791.

MassHealth—What a Difference a Year Makes



By Barry Major, Doral Dental/MassHealth Contract Director

In January 2008, the prospect of adding more than 200 providers to the MassHealth network was bleak at best. With enrollment turnaround times peaking at 60 days, rising claim rejections, and the general hurdles of implementing a new program, the verdict was still out on whether or not the MassHealth Program was really going to take off and start to make a dent in the state's access-to-care problem.

But, what a difference a year makes. Last year was filled with major milestones and accomplishments for the MassHealth Program, so we thought it was important to point out the progress we've made as an oral health community.

It was clear that the implementation of caseload capacity had a positive impact on provider enrollment. In a 2008 survey, 74 percent of providers who responded stated that caseload capacity had an influence on their decision to enroll in the program. In addition, a new streamlined application provided a significant reduction in enrollment

turnaround time to less than 30 days.

Doral's MassHealth team provided training to all providers looking at participating in the program, as well as those currently enrolled. This played a significant role in increasing electronic claims usage from 55 percent from April to December 2007 to 65 percent in 2008. It also contributed to a more than 50 percent reduction in rejected claims, which in turn resulted in the same reduction in provider frustration.

It's apparent that all the hard work of the Commonwealth, Doral, MDS, and providers and their staffs has begun to pay off. The combination of all of these improvements resulted in MassHealth processing an unprecedented 405 applications, bringing the total number of participating providers to 1,617 by the end of 2008. Despite all of the progress made last year, the program is still in need of providers, and that's where you can help. Join MassHealth and make 2009 the year YOU become a MassHealth hero!

"We make too much money for assistance and not enough to get by . . . so a program such as yours was a blessing."

—Lauren Roy, mother of two children treated on the MDS Foundation Mobile Access to Care Van
(See related article on p. 4)





Efrain Ruiz, DMD



Adrien "Bill" Mercier Jr., DDS

MassHealth Member Spotlight

ACCESS UPDATE recently spoke to two MDS member dentists regarding their experiences as MassHealth providers. Efrain Ruiz, DMD, a pediatric dentist in Brockton, has been a MassHealth member since 1988. Adrien "Bill" Mercier Jr., DDS, a general dentist in South Dartmouth, joined MassHealth in 1974, left in 1983, and rejoined in November 2008.

Q. What motivated you to join MassHealth?

A. Dr. Ruiz: I never gave it a second thought. I felt, and still feel, that there is a moral obligation to give back.

A. Dr. Mercier: I had patients leave my practice when they had hard times. I wanted to help them, but before [the changes to the program], I could not control the number of patients I took. Now I can control how many patients I see. I'm not overwhelmed. Dental is running this, so it's a lot more like an insurance company. We e-file and receive payment via direct deposit. I am getting paid and can easily keep track of it.

Q. What do you like most about the program?

A. Dr. Ruiz: The kids. Also, the personal satisfaction of helping—actually making a difference—kids who need my services badly. Most parents are very appreciative of my services.

A. Dr. Mercier: The [MassHealth Program] is really helping the kids—it has great coverage and an okay pay schedule.

Q. What do you think could still be improved upon?

A. Dr. Ruiz: Fees have improved significantly, and speed of payment has improved, as well. One area that still needs help is information as far as eligibility is concerned (i.e., when patients do or do not have other insurance).

A. Dr. Mercier: Adult care is limited and the fees are very low. They need to increase the fees so we can at least break even on costs.

Q. Is there any one experience with a MassHealth patient or family that stands out in your mind and that made you think to yourself, "This was the right thing to do"?

A. Dr. Ruiz: Too many. Every day I am reminded that it was the right decision. Especially when the parents sincerely thank you . . . when they felt that no other help was there for them. Helping those kids with serious dental problems is such a reward.

A. Dr. Mercier: I had one patient who had let his teeth go for years—and when I was finished, he looked completely different with a full set of teeth. He was very appreciative.

Q. How has being able to limit the number of MassHealth patients you treat helped you to manage your participation in the program and benefited your practice?

A. Dr. Mercier: The fact that I can control the number of patients I see is one of the reasons I came back. I wanted to control the number of cases I had in treatment at one time.

Q. How much personal satisfaction have you received from helping people in need?

A. Dr. Ruiz: Again, I can't even describe what a good feeling you get when treating kids who really—and very badly—need your services. It is not always easy practicing dentistry in these times, but it is terrific to be able to make a good living and get this level of personal satisfaction at the same time.

Q. Based on your experience, what's the one thing you would say to a colleague to encourage him or her to join?

A. Dr. Ruiz: MassHealth has changed quite a bit since I joined. A lot of problems that existed in the past have been addressed. Of course, it is not perfect, but it is a lot better than it used to be. There is a totally new philosophy, and it has made the process much easier. The fee schedule has improved significantly, and the billing and prior approvals system is much better. But most important is knowing that you are helping and making such a difference in the lives of people in need.

A. Dr. Mercier: There is no downside—you can keep your patients in your practice and help them through the hard economic times, and you can control how many of those patients you treat. And at the end of the day, you feel good knowing you have done your part in helping the underserved.

MAC Van Keeps on Rolling

The MDS Foundation Mobile Access to Care (MAC) Van continues to roll throughout the state, providing much-needed dental care to underserved children. Since the program's inception in February 2007, the MAC Van has treated more than 3,275 patients, resulting in more than \$800,000 worth of free care. The success of this program is due to the generosity of MDS volunteer dentists, dental assistants, and dental hygienists, as well as our sponsors. More than 500 volunteers have donated their time on the MAC Van, with many participating multiple times.

To find out more about how you can get involved, please contact Ellen Factor, MAC Van program manager, at (508) 449-6028 or efactor@massdental.org.

MAC Van Service Schedule*

Week	Location
June 1, 2009	Cape Cod District/TBA
June 8, 2009	Wachusett District/TBA
June 15, 2009	North Shore District/TBA
June 22, 2009	Berkshire District/TBA
June 29, 2009	South Shore District/TBA
July 6, 2009	Valley District & Hale Reservation Camps
July 13, 2009	Hale Reservation Camps
July 20, 2009	Worcester District & Hale Reservation Camps
July 27, 2009	Middlesex District & Hale Reservation Camps

Visit www.mdsfoundation.org/macvan for schedule updates. *Subject to change.

Local Dental Schools Help *Give Kids a Smile*

While the month of February was filled with winter storms and Valentine's Day hearts, two special events were also taking place—National Children's Dental Health Month and *Give Kids a Smile Day*, both sponsored by the American Dental Association (ADA).

National Children's Dental Health Month is a way to raise awareness about children's oral health. *Give Kids a Smile Day* is held on the first Friday of Dental Health Month, and it's a way for dentists to reach out to children in their community to provide oral health services and education. In support of good oral health for kids, the three dental schools in Massachusetts decided to take part in activities for Dental Health Month/*Give Kids a Smile Day*.

Boston University

The Boston University Goldman School of Dental Medicine (BUGSDM) chapter of the American Association of Women Dentists held an event at Rosie's Place, a shelter for abused and homeless women that offers emergency and long-term assistance. The event, held on February 17, 2009, was part of the Rosie's Place Childworks Program, which features educational activities and programming for children while their mothers receive necessary support services.

"The event teaches dental students some humility and to not take things for granted," says BUGSDM Oral Health Promotion Director Kathy Lituri, RDH. "It teaches them about what types of issues are affecting families. It was an eye-opener for all."

Each child who participated received a "dental passport" that they took to each of six stations. At each station—which ranged from "Brushing and Flossing," to "Dental Careers,"

to "Healthy Eating for Healthy Teeth"—the children participated in an activity and received a sticker for their passport. The event was staffed by BUGSDM students, dental hygiene students, and other volunteers. At the end of the event, the children received a goodie bag filled with a toothbrush and other items supplied by the ADA's *Give Kids a Smile* Program. Information on oral health was also available for parents.

"My favorite part of the event was seeing the kids enjoy learning about oral health," says third-year dental student Annie Burns, who volunteered at the event. "Oral health is a part of medicine that is not emphasized very much, and it was nice to see the kids learning new things that they may not learn anywhere else."

Harvard University

On the morning of Saturday, February 7, 2009, nearly half of the student body at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) filled the Harvard Dental Clinic for their annual *Give Kids a Smile* event. Organized by first-year dental students Colleen Greene and Rebecca Kibler, nearly 50 children from inner-city Boston received a free dental exam and cleaning. The exams were performed by third- and fourth-year HSDM students, with first- and second-year students assisting, under the supervision of dental faculty. In addition to the cleanings, various stations were set up to teach children about the importance of oral health. The younger children present learned how to properly brush their teeth using stuffed animals and oversized toothbrushes. Another station was set up to teach children how floss works by running dental floss between the peanut-butter-covered fingers of dental students.



BUGSDM fourth-year dental student Chelsea Deutscher demonstrates to one-and-a-half-year-old Marlyna Riopelle how junk food sticks to teeth.

"One unique aspect to this year's program was that all children became official patients of record at the Harvard Dental Center," says Greene. "Many student-dentists established follow-up appointments during the event to continue necessary treatment for the children."

Older children were also engaged at an educational table that discussed dentistry as a career. The table allowed the kids to make an impression of their own teeth, while learning what it takes to become a dentist.

"All in all, I think these educational activities stirred up a lot of enthusiasm among the kids," says Kibler.

Tufts University

Enthusiasm for Dental Health Month and *Give Kids a Smile Day* was also prevalent at the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine.

Ongoing community outreach and education is common for Tufts dental students and faculty. The pediatric dental clinic conducted several events in honor of National Children's Dental Health Month, including giving a talk about oral health at a Chinatown-based youth organization; providing oral health education for parents and children in the general pediatrics department at Tufts Medical Center; and distributing toothbrushes and teaching brushing techniques at a nursery school in Newton Highlands.

"A goal of our department is to provide opportunities for community outreach," says Virginia "Ginger" Burns, RDH, a dental hygienist in the department of pediatric dentistry at Tufts.

The school also distributed dental health awareness posters in English and Spanish at Boston elementary schools, as well as goodie bags containing toothbrushes and toothpaste.

By partnering with their communities, these dental schools were able to give kids more than a smile: they gave them dental cleanings, oral health education, and a little bit of fun.

For more information on *Give Kids a Smile Day* and National Children's Dental Health Month, please visit www.ada.org.

Children at the Harvard Dental Clinic practice flossing on a dental student's hand covered in peanut butter.



PHOTO CREDIT: Jan Reiss/Harvard School of Dental Medicine



Spotlight on Volunteers

The following MDS member dentists and staff generously donated their services and time to help make a difference in children's lives on the MDS Foundation Mobile Access to Care (MAC) Van during January, February, and March 2009.

Dentists

Dr. Norman Becker
 Dr. John Benecchi
 Dr. Peter Blanchard
 Dr. Diane Bonanni
 Dr. Kerri Bourgeois
 Dr. Patrick Carsell
 Dr. Lisa Carvalho
 Dr. Paul Cedrone
 Dr. Dean Chang
 Dr. Carolyn Coppe
 Dr. Linda Drennen
 Dr. Badrieh Edalatpour
 Dr. Arthur Eddy
 Dr. Lisa Gamache
 Dr. John Giordano
 Dr. L. Michael Gouveia
 Dr. Donna Hackley
 Dr. Peter Hjorth
 Dr. Michel Jusseaume
 Dr. David Katz
 Dr. Jolene Krol
 Dr. Amelia Grabe Lane
 Dr. Douglas Leigh
 Dr. Charles Levy
 Dr. Richard LoGuercio
 Dr. Jolanta Macdonald
 Dr. Nancy Machermer
 Dr. George Maloney
 Dr. Srijan Mehta
 Dr. Charles Nemser
 Dr. James Nesti
 Dr. Nan Niland
 Dr. Jill O'Connell
 Dr. John O'Horo
 Dr. Daniela O'Neill
 Dr. Kristin Olsen-Smith
 Dr. Ella Oong
 Dr. Sara Perkins
 Dr. Richard Pierce
 Dr. Leslie Racowsky
 Dr. Sujatha Revur
 Dr. Norman Rogers
 Dr. Peter Schortmann
 Dr. Jeffrey Shaefer
 Dr. Howard Smith
 Dr. Michael Tabbah
 Dr. Tina Theroux
 Dr. Joan Thompson
 Dr. Steve Weisner
 Dr. Kevin Wells
 Dr. Chuanjun Wu
 Dr. Natalya Yantovsky
 Dr. Nora Zaki

Dental Hygienists

Darc Baretto
 Rita Baumier
 Lorri Fucile
 Lisa Greenbush
 Judy Hall
 Christine Kucka
 Rebecca Lundrigan
 Kerri Anne Mullaney
 Dianne Potter
 Kathleen Smietana

Dental Assistants

Erika Arsenault
 Megan Blessing
 Denise Crane
 Mary Ellen Daigenault
 Shelley DeMyer
 Josie Garcia
 Victoria Inamorati
 Sabrina Jacinto
 Cynthia Jerominek
 Lisa Lariviere
 Anna Lazarus
 Diane Leal
 Alice Leighton
 Kristin Lowe
 Tracy Martin
 Esperanza Mata
 Kara McCray
 Jane Myung
 Diane Popp
 Irma Sasic
 Susan Schortmann
 Kristen Streb
 Laurel Walker

Dental Hygiene

Students

Ali Ambroz
 Sarah Ares
 Jessica Billiel
 Alexis de Pina
 Mildred Goyco
 Lori Herbert
 Rebecca Mariano
 Megan Nelson
 Courtney Powers
 Shannan Regienus
 Colby Starr
 Tammy Vinsant
 Lucy Yang

Dental Assisting

Student

Diana Linskey

Massachusetts Dental Society

Two Willow Street, Suite 200, Southborough, MA 01745-1027

(508) 480-9797 • (800) 342-8747 • Fax (508) 480-0002

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Parent Gives Thanks for Mobile Access to Care (MAC) Van

As the Massachusetts Dental Society Foundation Mobile Access to Care (MAC) Van pulled into the Narragansett Middle School on Friday, January 23, 2009, it was another scheduled stop on the Van's ongoing route to provide Massachusetts children with free dental care. But for one mother, it was so much more.

When Lauren Roy, a mother of two boys from Baldwinville, a small town near Gardner, received a letter saying that the MAC Van would be visiting her sons' school to provide students with dental treatment, she was dubious. Children at the school would be able to receive dental care, including cleanings, fluoride varnishes, and any necessary restorative work, onboard a mobile dental van? And at no cost?

"When I heard about the program at the school, I was skeptical," says Roy. "I thought, 'I'll apply, and they'll tell us no.'"

Her skepticism was disproved, however, as this was not the case. There is no application process for children who are seen on the MAC Van, but they do need to have a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian authorizing them to receive treatment. The Van visits schools, Head Start programs, summer camps, and other kid-friendly locations across the state, year-round, to provide free dental care. MDS member dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants from the area volunteer their time and expertise on the Van.

"My husband's employer does not provide dental insurance. Also, I don't have a car, so my ability to get my children to the dentist was further compromised," says Roy.



And what did Roy's children think of their visit to the dental clinic on wheels? "The boys were both happy to be able to go," she says.

While the MAC Van provided the children with oral care they may not otherwise have received, it brought more than that to the Roy family.

"We make too much money for assistance and not enough to get by. We have no 'extra' income, so a program such as yours was a blessing," says Roy. "I felt empowered that I was again able to provide my children with appropriate care. Thank you!"

For more information on the MAC Van Program, including the upcoming schedule, or to learn how to volunteer, please visit www.mdsfoundation.org/macvan.