

\$25,000 grant aids kids' dental care

Polk County children to get free restorative care thanks to award from Salem Health

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Uninsured children in Polk County will now have the opportunity to receive free restorative dental care thanks to a \$25,000 grant from Salem Health.

Salem Health awarded the Community Partnership Grant to the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency. It will be used to fund the Vouchers for Kids project's collaboration with Capitol Dental Care's Dental Outreach Program.

"It is critical that our entire community have access to quality health and dental care," said Jon Reeves, executive director of Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency.

Under the voucher program, Capitol Dental Care professionals will connect children to both insurance resources and needed oral health treatment. The organization's data indicates that at least 10 percent of Polk County children are uninsured and in need of serious dental care.

The longer preventive care is neglected, the higher the percentage will be, officials said. Providing dental care can cut down on rampant tooth decay, surgery and emergency room visits, leading to significant health care savings.

Salem Health officials said this is this sign of a successful initiative — one that improves the quality of life for those at risk in the community and decreases the need for catastrophic care.

In 2016, Capitol Dental Care's outreach program provided 3,696 school children with care and applied more than 12,000 sealants.

"Proactive dental care is associated with children attending more school, experiencing better school success, and utilizing less emergency resources, not to mention increasing their comfort and quality of life," Reeves said.



Salem Health presents a \$25,000 Community Partnership Grant to Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency to fund dental care for uninsured Polk County children.

Salem Health introduced its Community Partnership Grant in 2014. It is expected to award more than \$300,000 this year.

"Strong, healthy teeth can make a huge difference in a child's life and future," said Sharon Heuer, Director of Community Benefit at Salem Health. "This voucher project promises to increase health

equity in Polk County, and we're happy to partner with MWVCAA and Capitol Dental Care to address this very important concern in these children's lives."

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