



NEWS RELEASE

From: Piedmont Virginia Dental Health Foundation
Contact: John Lambert
540 580-8491
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Community Dental Clinic Celebrates 10 Years *37,000 Patient Visits to Treat Poor Children and Adults In Martinsville-Henry County*

Ten years ago tomorrow, more than 200 people stood in line as the Community Dental Clinic opened in Uptown Martinsville.

Today, the Clinic observes its 10th anniversary, having provided more than \$8 million in dental services to unemployed or uninsured children and adults. Since the opening, there have been approximately 37,000 patient visits.

“There never was any doubt about the need,” said Dr. Mark Crabtree, who founded the Clinic. “The doubt was whether the community could sustain the Clinic. What has been accomplished here is a miracle.”

Crabtree, a native of the community who has been practicing dentistry in Martinsville since 1985, told a group of supporters at the Clinic today that “the Clinic represents the best of Martinsville-Henry County. This is the result of the

compassion that exists in this community and a determination that the health care needs of every person will be met, no matter the economic conditions.”

Crabtree praised the support of the Harvest Foundation, which has been the Foundation’s financial partner from the beginning. The Foundation has made grants totaling \$1.7 million to support the Clinic. “While the Foundation is the bedrock of our support, we would not be here today without donations from other organizations, including governments, and businesses and individuals.”

Melissa Hopkins of Horsepasture spoke on behalf of the thousands of patients who have been treated at the Clinic. “I stood in line outside this building on day one to get treated,” she said, “and like thousands of others, I continue to come back here. I pay about \$20 a visit, and I would not have dental care any other way.

“It’s magnificent for a community as small as ours with the tough economic times we have here to have this clinic,” Hopkins added. “It has answered prayers for thousands of us.”

Michael D. Ehrat, CEO of Memorial Hospital of Martinsville & Henry County, praised the leadership of the community “for the commitment to take care of our own right here at home.”

Across the nation dental visits are increasing at hospital emergency rooms, he said. One national organization has reported that the number increased from just over 1 million in 2000 to more than 2-million in 2010.

“But that is not occurring in Martinsville,” he continued. “Our Emergency Department actually has experienced a decrease in dental visits—a total decrease of 34 percent since 2007, and there is one reason for that decrease: the Community Dental Clinic.

“We support the Clinic because it’s an example of how a hospital and a community should work together to improve the health of all citizens,” he added.

Crabtree said the relationship with the VCU School of Dentistry has enabled the Clinic to provide quality dental care. Fourth year students come to Martinsville, living in dormitory-like space above the Clinic, to treat patients.

“This partnership is mutually-beneficial,” said Crabtree. “The students receive outstanding practical experience and learn the value of public health service, while our patients receive excellent care.” He noted that the Clinic is considered the best extramural site for VCU dental students in the entire Commonwealth.

The Clinic has one paid dentist, Dr. James Hartigan, who has returned to the Clinic after serving as the first dentist 10 years ago. He supervises the VCU

students and treats patients. Approximately 75 percent of dentists in private practice in the community volunteer at the Clinic.

“This is a partnership that works and will continue to work as long as we have the support of the community,” said Crabtree.

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The mission of the Piedmont Virginia Dental Health Foundation is to improve the oral health of our community’s disadvantaged citizens through dental and dental hygiene services and oral health education. For more information, visit www.piedmontdentalhealth.org