



NEWS RELEASE

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VCU Students Return to Martinsville *Community Dental Clinic Now at Full Staff*

It's a normal week at the Community Dental Clinic in Martinsville for the first time in 15 months.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused the Clinic, which provides dental care to low-income adults and children, to close in March 2020. Last month, Dr. Aamn Abbasi became the Clinic Dentist.

Fourth year students from the VCU School of Dentistry have returned to the Clinic, working under the supervision of Dr. Abbasi and local dentists who volunteer their time. The students spend at least a week at the Clinic as part of their training.

Catherine Malone of Lynchburg is a VCU student. "I am enjoying my time at the Clinic," she said. "Treating the patients is a great experience in a real-world environment. I learn, and the patients leave free of pain or other issues. It's a rewarding feeling to help people with preventive oral health."

Malone plans to become an oral surgeon and will begin her training next year after graduation. "I hope to volunteer or work part-time in a community dental setting."

Kourie Crismond is a VCU student studying to become a dental hygienist. A native of Fredericksburg, she said, "I enjoy helping people. Quality dental care makes patients feel more confident and enjoy a smile."

Crismond says “working at the Clinic is a great opportunity to apply what I’ve learned in school. I am becoming more productive in this setting where I treat one patient every hour.

“Patients are part of the team, and we hope empowering them to take care of their dental needs will lead to better compliance.”

When Crismond graduates next year, she plans to volunteer in public health.

Crismond and Malone were joined at the Clinic last week by Reema Rawal, a native of Kathmandu, Nepal, and Natalia Cherney of Vienna, VCU students who also will graduate next year.

“I appreciate the opportunity to work with the students,” said Dr. Abbasi. “They are well prepared and care very much about these patients.

“Treating patients in the Clinic provides students with an excellent opportunity to experience the real world of dentistry,” added Dr. Abbasi. “The quality of care provided by the students is outstanding. I’m very impressed by the students.”

Every dental student in the senior class at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry rotates at least one week through the Martinsville Clinic. Approximately 1,400 dental students have treated patients at the Clinic since it opened in 2005. “Our relationship with the VCU School of Dentistry has enabled the Foundation to serve a larger number of patients in our community,” said Dr. Mark Crabtree, president of the Foundation.

“This is win-win situation for the School and students and our community. The students gain practical experience in Martinsville and an understanding of the importance of meeting the needs of the underserved in our community and advancing the quality of oral health,” he added.

Fees are based on a sliding scale. Patients pay a minimum of \$25 per visit. The Clinic, at 23 Fayette Street, is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. Patients should call 276 632-7727 for an appointment.

In its 15 years, the Clinic has provided more than \$12.5 million in services. The Clinic handles appropriately 5,000 visits annually.

Donations from businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals keep the Clinic open. The Harvest Foundation is the lead financial partner of the Piedmont Virginia Dental Health Foundation. Teresa White has been the Clinic Coordinator for seven years. For more information, visit www.piedmontdental.org.

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