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Volunteer Dental Outreach approaches a decade of free dentistry
Charity surpasses \$3 million milestone and pushes through pandemic

Haliburton, Ont., May 14, 2021 – On May 19, 2011, the Volunteer Dental Outreach (VDO) for Haliburton County opened its doors to fill a need in the Haliburton Highlands. From those humble beginnings, it has come a long way thanks to the enduring support of the community, a team of devoted volunteers and dental professionals, and many generous financial contributions.

Since that first day, the VDO has remained true to its mission: provide free urgent dental care for low-income residents in the area. Operating at 739 Mountain St. in the village of Haliburton, the clinic's volunteers have improved the smiles and oral health of 1,067 patients, totalling more than \$3.1 million in free dentistry. For many, the transformations have been life-changing, giving them the confidence to pursue employment opportunities and live without crippling pain.

Founders Bill and Lisa Kerr, who sit on the board as board president and director, respectively, are grateful the clinic has been able to help so many people.

“We are so very proud of what everyone has accomplished through VDO,” they said. “It never occurred to us that it would be as successful as it is. What started as an idea to see a few patients in our off-time quickly turned into operating a stand-alone dental office that runs several days per week.”

The Kerrs say none of it would be possible without dedicated dental professionals who volunteer their time, the board of directors and the people who show up annually to sponsor or play in the annual golf tournament fundraiser. They also highlighted a mentorship program with fourth year dental students from the University of Toronto, which has been beneficial for both soon-to-be graduates and the clinic's patients.

“The greatest achievements of VDO would be consistently having caring and compassionate volunteers who not only agree to come look after patients but love coming to help people in need.”

The COVID-19 pandemic threw a curveball at the VDO. To adhere to updated protocols from the province, the clinic had to be retrofitted and safety devices purchased. This was all made possible with funding from the Haliburton County Development Corporation. Another big change was a partnership with the Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit to launch the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program for Haliburton County. It has enabled the team to double the number of patients they treat.

VDO board chair Janis Parker, who has also been involved from day one, is very happy to be part of this important cause.



“I consider the VDO the most impactful charity that I have been lucky enough to be part of,” said Parker. “I am so proud of what we have created for our community.”

She praised the Kerrs for recognizing, and facilitating, this opportunity in the community.

“Although it takes a community, it also takes visionaries,” she said.

Stats and volunteer numbers over 10 years (as of May 10)

- \$3,105,169 in free dentistry
- 8,526 appointments
- 1,067 patients
- 32 dentists
- 22 dental hygienists
- 2 dental hygiene students
- 16 dental assistants
- 1 denturist and 1 denturist student
- 6 dental office administrators
- 97 UofT fourth year students
- 5 pre-dent science students
- 13 board members
- 12 days dedicated to the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program.

To learn more about the VDO, visit dental-outreach.com. Interviews can be arranged by contacting Lisa Kerr.