



To witness the human side of dental education, you need only stand in a corner of the reception area at the UMKC School of Dentistry's Rinehart Clinic as its morning or afternoon sessions get underway. The area, which is not small, is packed with people of every possible age, color, ethnicity, education and income. Looking across the clinic you'll see people reading, talking, corralling kids or assisting the elderly. Some patients may be new to the clinic and look a little bewildered by the procession of student doctors strolling in, calling names, greeting their patients and disappearing into the mysterious halls behind the reception desk. Others have been to the dental school many times and greet their student doctors with a smile, a handshake and occasionally a hug. As you watch this seemingly chaotic, yet charming cavalcade of humanity, you'll begin to notice that the student doctors and dental hygienists at the UMKC School of Dentistry are not just treating patients, they're treating patients as people (with genuine respect, compassion and concern). Remarkably, UMKC students treat patients as people at the rate of approximately 80,000 patient visits per year.

What's not so easily seen (or counted) are the innumerable ways that UMKC dental and dental hygiene students selflessly devote themselves to serving people beyond the bounds of the school's Rinehart Clinic. Whether UMKC students are rotating through a community health center as part

SPIRIT OF SERVICE SOARS AMONG UMKC STUDENTS

of the school's academic program, volunteering to perform screenings at the Special Olympics or traveling to Central or South America, UMKC dental and dental hygiene students not only learn, but live the ADA Principle of Beneficence, which states "the dentist's primary obligation is service to the patient and the public-at-large."

"Volunteer service is kind of in our students' nature," says Michael McCunniff (DDS '83), director of Outreach and chair of the Department of Dental Public Health and Behavioral Science. "A history of giving back to community is actually something the school's admission committee looks for in prospective students."

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The degree to which UMKC students devote themselves to community service even came to the attention of the President of the United States through the USA Freedom Corps, an office of the White House. The USA Freedom Corp had become aware of Students Take Action (STA), a student volunteer organization at the School of Dentistry. The Corp was so impressed by STA activities as well as its president at the time, Ashley Knight (DDS Class of '09), that the office asked STA faculty advisers Michael McCunniff (DDS '83) and Becky Smith (DDS '95) to nominate Ashley to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award. On Thursday, May 29, 2008, Ashley Knight met President George W. Bush on the tarmac of a Kansas City suburban airport where he personally presented her with the President's Volunteer Service Award. The occasion was not only a crowning achievement for Ashley, but for the spirit of volunteerism at the UMKC School of Dentistry, as well. (*Please read Ashley's article, "My Call to Service," on page 5.*)

In honor of Ashley's stunning recognition, we thought this would be a fitting opportunity to recognize some of the past and present ways UMKC dental and dental hygiene students, graduates and faculty selflessly donate their time, talent and energy to improving the world we all share.

THEODOSIA, MO., OUTREACH PROGRAM

In 1996 the UMKC School of Dentistry drastically extended the reach of its outreach efforts after the school nurse in the town of Theodosia (population 240) in south-central Missouri contacted former dean Michael Reed. She asked him if the UMKC School of Dentistry might be able to deliver dental care to Theodosia's elementary school



students as part of a public health grant the district had been awarded. The grant was intended to help Theodosia address the access to care challenge it faced because of its small size and remote location. Dean Reed responded by empowering Harvey Eplee (DDS '71) and Michael McCunnif (DDS '83) to develop a program to assist Theodosia. From 1996 until 2007, the school dispatched a group of dental students and faculty, outfitted with portable equipment, to Theodosia in the fall and spring to deliver dental care to the town's school children.

EXTRAMURAL CLINICAL ROTATIONS

As part of the UMKC School of Dentistry's Community-Based Dental

Education course, dental students participate in Extramural Clinical Rotations. Students spend a week during their third year and fourth years delivering care at a variety of sites in a network of Community Health



Centers and Rural Federally Qualified Health Centers. By serving on multi-disciplinary teams that meet the primary health care needs of underserved populations, students are able practice alternative methods of dental care delivery to different populations at high risk for dental disease.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

HONDURAS: Each year since 2006 about 30 UMKC students, faculty and alumni travel to Honduras, Central America, where they spend two weeks in August delivering comprehensive dental care to residents in and around the city of Pimienta. Tom Jones (DDS '66) and Dr. Amul Singh (both are clinical assistant professors of General Dentistry) have been organizing the trips.



NICARAGUA: Since 2000 Greg Houston (DDS '79), clinical assistant professor of General Dentistry, has been organizing groups of about 12 UMKC students and faculty to deliver dental care to underserved populations in Nicaragua. Dr. Houston reports that their last trip occurred in March 2007, and he's planning to organize a week-long trip during spring break in 2009.

GUATEMALA: Since 1997, Joe Spalitto (BS '68, DDS '72) a part-time UMKC clinical faculty member, and his wife Liz (DH '68), along with parishioners from St. Thomas More Church in Kansas City, Mo., and volunteers from the School of Dentistry and the community, have traveled to Guatemala to offer dental care to rural, indigenous people. On each trip, they have treated more than 200 patients with severe dental problems.

STUDENTS TAKE ACTION

Students Take Action (STA) was founded in 1998 by a group of dental and dental hygiene students dedicated to



compassion and comradeship through community service. The group takes pride in making a difference in the Kansas City metro area by serving the needs of the community. STA members volunteer at free and discounted clinics, perform screenings at various events, and mentor children. The group semi-annually organizes Shear Madness, a “fundrazor” that raises money to send children with cancer to Camp Quality, an area summer camp, free of charge. Students, faculty, and staff raise money by having their heads shaved in front of the Shear Madness audience. Last year the event raised over \$7,000.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS VOLUNTEERS



In the spring of each year (for most of the past 10 years) John Haynes (BS '56, DDS '60, MA '71), chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, has annually organized a group of about 80 student and alumni volunteers to work at Kansas City Special Olympics. The volunteers perform screenings and offer tooth brushing instruction to the athletes. If the athletes indicate that they don't have a dentist, the volunteers provide them with a list of dentists who will provide care. The athletes also receive a bag of freebies that include a tooth brush and dental floss.

My Call to Service

By Ashley Knight (Dental Class of 2009), immediate past president of Students Take Action (Editor's note: President George W. Bush personally presented Ashley with the President's Call to Service Award at a special ceremony May 29, 2008.)



Even before I arrived at the UMKC School of Dentistry as a dental student, I'd heard about the student-led volunteer organization, Students Take Action (STA). I knew I wanted to be a part of this group, so I joined STA as a first-year dental student. I've had some of my finest, most rewarding experiences in dental school because of this organization. I have volunteered at the Kansas City Free Health Clinic, YouthFriends, Score One for Health, Shear Madness, Team Smile, the Ronald McDonald House, and various student screenings, including Project Breakthrough, the KCK Art Walk. Most recently I've volunteered with Tots-N-Teeth, a screening program for young children that I was able to help found after STA received a Harris Grant from the American Student Dental Association. As a UMKC dental student, I've also traveled to Guatemala where I provided dental care to the underserved in the local community of Itzapa. Although I haven't graduated yet, I know that I'll be a better dentist because of these experiences.

Recently I received the President's Call to Service Award for outstanding volunteer service from the National

Freedom Corps. President George W. Bush personally presented the award to me when he landed in the Kansas City area aboard Air Force

One in May 2008. Never did I imagine that my volunteer work would receive such recognition. I felt honored when I learned that STA advisors Dr. Michael McCunniff and Dr. Becky Smith had written a letter of recommendation to the White House on my behalf. Their letter led to a phone interview with the National Freedom Corps. Then when I heard that I had been selected to receive

this award — from the President personally — I was overwhelmed.

I never volunteer my time or energy to a program for any type of recognition or honor. I volunteer because I can and because it makes me feel like I'm doing something worthwhile, and I'm helping others in the process. To receive an honor like the President's Volunteer Service Award is just icing on the cake—a lot of icing! I look back on the experience of meeting the President and touring Air Force One and think how lucky I am. There are so many people at the School of Dentistry and in the Kansas City metro area who volunteer and offer their time and energy just as much as I do. I am just thankful I could represent the UMKC School of Dentistry and show the community that we, as dental professionals, gladly give of our time and expertise.