



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Announces Expansion of Rural Dentistry Pilot Program

CATHARINE YOUNG March 20, 2015

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Rural dentistry pilot program will increase access to dental care for students

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) said she is thrilled that the \$250,000 she secured in last year's state budget has expanded children's dental services across the Southern Tier.

A ribbon cutting at Cuba-Rushford Elementary School on Friday celebrated the widening of the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program that is operated by the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine.

Senator Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, worked with University at Buffalo Dean Michael Glick to help ensure that children in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties' rural communities receive the dental care they need.

"Having a program like this is a necessity for our region. Educational materials, preventative care, and restorative dental treatments will have a profound impact on the oral health of youngsters throughout the Southern Tier. The Rural Dentistry Pilot Program will help children establish healthy habits and allow caregivers to identify potential dental health issues. It will give our children the confident, healthy smiles they deserve," said Senator Young.

Adequate dental care is a critical component of an individual's overall health, especially for young children. According to the New York State Department of Health, untreated dental health issues can result in a wide range of problems including tooth loss, infection, speech difficulties, and other long-term effects. As a result, students may miss more days of school and find it difficult to concentrate on their studies.

"Dental care is one of the basic components of wellness, and anything we can do at Cuba-Rushford to see that our students get the attention and resources they need to live a healthier, happier life is something we will always partner with. We know that children whose physical, social, and emotional needs are met are much better learners," said Mr. Carlos Gildemeister, Superintendent of Cuba-Rushford Central School District.

“The UB School of Dental Medicine is excited to participate in this program that will expand access to oral health care, and increase dental student awareness of rural health issues. We are educating a group of future health care professionals, some of whom will ideally choose to practice and live in rural communities,” said Dean Michael Glick. “At the University at Buffalo and the School of Dental Medicine, our purpose – our promise – is to reach others. It’s a promise that knows no boundaries.”

In recent years, the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine has provided school-based mobile dentistry services to many children in Chautauqua County who have limited access to dental care. To provide these services, the program obtained a mobile dentist office retrofitted to a semi-truck that was funded through federal grants.

“The dental van has allowed our students to receive routine check-ups and cleanings which may have been missed because parents are unable to pay for those procedures. It has improved not only their dental health, but it has also boosted their self-image, and we are fortunate to have such a great program working in our community,” said Mr. William Caldwell, Principal of Southwestern Elementary School.

This state-funded pilot program expands these mobile dental services to Cattaraugus and Allegany counties, while continuing to strengthen the existing program in Chautauqua County. The project also introduces smaller portable dental units that can be used to conduct exams and provide preventative care inside schools. This will allow the mobile dentist office to travel throughout the region to deliver intensive services, expanding the reach and efficiency of the program.

The pilot program will result in a dramatic increase in access to dental care for students within Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany counties by providing preventative and intensive mobile dental services on-site at public schools in all three counties.

As a result, the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine will be able to study and report on the added mobile dental services in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany Counties. This effort includes identifying demographics, access barriers, and necessary resources so that best practices can be developed that can be applied throughout New York State.

Additionally, the project will involve dental students from the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, exposing them to the unique needs of rural populations and professional opportunities in rural areas.

The University at Buffalo has established the necessary agreements with participating schools, along with obtaining equipment to expand the program. This year, the program expects to reach seven entire school districts, ten additional schools, and several Head Start locations within the three counties. The program hopes to expand in upcoming years to reach more students in rural areas who have no other access to dental care.

“We are very thankful to the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine for providing their Mobile Dental Unit as a service to our Cuba-Rushford students. Our district is comprised of 13 townships, and to have dental care provided as an opportunity to all is fantastic,” said Mr. Gildemeister.

“We also are thankful to Senator Young who secured the grant for this mobile unit for the purposes of reaching out to families who might find it difficult to tap into dental care,” said Mr. Gildemeister.

“Improving access to dental care can only have positive effects on the health and well-being of children living in underserved rural areas. Our rural areas face unique geographic concerns of availability and access. This pilot program serves an important role in

highlighting those needs, developing solutions, and providing much-needed dental care,” said Senator Young.

Senator Young is working to secure another \$250,000 in this year’s budget to enable its continued success.