



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## **Senator Young Announces \$371,000 In Funding To Expand The UB S-Miles To Go Mobile Dental Program**

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JAMESTOWN – When dentists told Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District) that the program she established had treated a six-year-old boy whose baby teeth had rotted down to the gums, she felt a flood of mixed emotions.

“It is upsetting that this little child was suffering with pain and a massive infection, but I also felt a sense of relief that this boy and other children in need finally are receiving quality health care. It is changing their lives,” Senator Young said.

The Rural Dentistry Pilot Program, which Senator Young established, provides access to oral health care for underserved children in rural areas through the UB School of Dental Medicine S-Miles To Go Mobile Dental Program.

During the program’s visit to Bush Elementary School today, Senator Young announced that she has secured \$371,000 as part of the 2016-17 State Budget to support the S-Miles To Go program’s outreach efforts, allowing the program to provide dental care to an even greater number of children.

“Comprehensive dental care is a key component of overall good health, especially for young children. Establishing healthy habits and allowing dental health professionals to identify potential health issues early gives children the confident, healthy smiles they deserve,” said Senator Young.

Children living in rural areas have higher incidents of cavities and other dental problems, are less likely to have visited the dentist in the past year, and are more

likely to be uninsured, according to federal statistics.

For several years now, Senator Young has partnered with University at Buffalo, School of Dental Medicine to develop and expand the school's Rural Dentistry Pilot Program. The program brings dental students to rural areas, educating them to the unique needs of rural underserved populations.

The School of Dental Medicine has served the oral health needs of children in Chautauqua County for over 15 years with its school-based mobile dental unit. The mobile dental unit features state-of-the-art technology including an electronic health record and digital x-rays. The Rural Dentistry Project has allowed the program to expand into additional schools in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties.

As a result of the state funding secured by Senator Young, the program was able to purchase portable dental equipment that can be transported to school and Head Start sites prior to the arrival of the mobile dental van. A dental hygienist utilizes the portable equipment to provide preventive services such as oral health screenings, cleanings, sealants and fluoride treatments, allowing the mobile dental unit to visit additional schools. Children who need fillings, or extractions or stainless steel crowns are treated on the mobile dental van, or referred to a community provider.

"Having a program like this is a necessity for our region. Our rural areas face unique geographic concerns related to availability and access. Educating students and their parents about preventative care and dental treatments will have a positive impact on the oral health of youngsters throughout Chautauqua County, and all of the Southern Tier," Senator Young said.

Dr. Joseph Zambon, Dean, University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, said, "We are grateful to Senator Young for her support in helping us expand our S-Miles To Go Program. With Senator Young's help, we've been able to serve more schools and more children. As we've been told by several school principals, there are children who would not receive dental care except for our S-Miles To Go Program."

The program has worked with 15 school districts in Chautauqua County, including: Brocton, Cassadaga Valley, Chautauqua Lake, Clymer, Dunkirk, Fredonia, Gowanda, Jamestown, Panama, Ripley, Sherman, Pine Valley, Silver Creek, Forestville, and Westfield.

Tim O. Mains, Superintendent, Jamestown City School District, said, "Our nurses can screen for vision and hearing, but not for oral health. That is why this program is so very important to us. Our students truly benefit from this valuable program."

According to a report produced by the University at Buffalo's School of Dental Medicine, in conjunction with the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program, 63 percent of the children seen on the mobile dental unit have untreated cavities, and significantly higher cavity rates than third grade children statewide. Children seen on the mobile dental unit experienced a lower rate of sealants, the preventive coating placed on permanent molars to prevent cavities. Many of these children had already experienced decay on their permanent molars, prior to their treatment. The percentage of children with at least one dental visit in the past year was only 26 percent, as compared to 83 percent statewide and 85 percent for Chautauqua County.

The report cited a lack of providers willing to treat children with state sponsored insurances (Medicaid and Child Health Plus) and the shortage of dentists willing to treat young children as possible causes for the higher cavity rates and molar decay.

Since 2015, Senator Young has secured more than \$871,000 to ensure access to critical dental health care through the rural dentistry pilot program. She has also helped obtain \$500,000 for the New York State Dental Association's demonstration program.