



The Salvation Army Judy D. Zelnak Center of Hope
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Meeting a critical need

Access to dental care is a problem in Wake County and across North Carolina. For a variety of reasons (cost, unemployment and loss of dental insurance, availability of dentists in certain geographical areas, transportation, educational level, etc.) lower income adults have far fewer visits to the dentists and lose considerably more teeth over time than higher income adults. By age 65, some 40% of adults in households with income less than \$15,000 have lost all their natural teeth. In 2008 alone, over 69,000 visits to NC hospital emergency rooms were for dental reasons. The problems are not limited just to pain, loss of function, poorer nutrition, esthetic concerns and lowered self-esteem. Dental diseases are increasingly being linked to cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes and other systemic problems.

Targeting the underserved

Wake Smiles is the only dental home in Wake County that sees uninsured adults who fall within the 200% poverty guidelines. Eligibility is determined by the safety net providers who refer to Wake Smiles. There is a \$20 copay for each significant visit and patients are responsible for laboratory fees for partials, crowns and dentures. Staffed by volunteer dentists and hygienists, Wake Smiles accepts referrals from local safety net organizations: Alliance Medical Ministry, The Healing Place, Open Door Clinic of Urban Ministries, Mariam Clinic, Project Access, Raleigh Rescue Mission and The Salvation Army.

Our history

In 2001, a small group of Wake County dentists formed Wake Smiles, a 501(c)(3), to treat uninsured and underserved patients. Wake Smiles partnered with Wake Health Services, Inc. (WHSI), as the volunteer component of their dental program. Restricted clinical hours and limited growth potential in the WHSI New Bern Ridge clinic led Wake Smiles to seek new opportunities to expand services to low income county residents.

In 2012, The Salvation Army asked Wake Smiles about administering a dental program in its new facility. The Salvation Army Judy D. Zelnak Center of Hope opened in the spring of 2013, but the space designated for the dental clinic remained unfinished. Wake Smiles was asked to help plan the dental clinic and raise funds to up fit the facility. In return, Wake Smiles would manage the new clinic with normal operating expenses with no rent and utilities and parking provided by The Salvation Army. With a generous grant of \$200,000 from the Rotary Club of Raleigh along with other contributions, Wake Smiles raised \$250K to cover initial costs.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation granted \$350,000 to Wake Smiles for 2013/2014 to hire an Executive Director and auxiliary personnel, as well as to subcontract with Project Access to help recruit volunteers.

In 2013, Wake Smiles performed 1,770 procedures saving the patients \$192,272. In 2014, Wake Smiles performed 2,822 procedures saving the patients \$265,622. Thirty dentists volunteered 439 hours to provide treatment for 527 patients in the new clinic.

The growing demands for care

To expand its services, Wake Smiles needs more volunteer dentists/hygienists and additional funding. Wake Smiles presently has 30 some volunteer dentists/hygienists who have the option of working in the clinic or in their private offices.

Wake Smiles must pay for supplies, instruments, software / hardware /equipment maintenance, insurance, sterilization and radiation inspections, OSHA compliance and annual audits. Since the BCBSNC Foundation grant expired in 2014, Wake Smiles will also be responsible for the salaries of the executive director, volunteer coordinator, and paid auxiliaries. Annual expenses, roughly \$250K at present, will rise as the number of indigent patients treated increases.

While its past focus has been on emergency dental care, Wake Smiles aims to provide comprehensive dental services. We envision the future possibility of having a paid Dental Director so Wake Smiles can become an externship site for dental students at UNC and ECU as well as a rotation site for dental hygienists and assistants from Wake Tech.

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Wake Smiles: trade name for the tax exempt 501(C)(3) Raleigh/Wake County Dental Society Community Dental Health Program, Inc