

September 20, 2018

Julie Heflin, 502-852-7987, julie.heflin@louisville.edu
Tim Crawford, 606-598-3155, tcrawford@rbmission.org

Follow the UofL Health Sciences Center



No dental care for miles around

UofL, Red Bird Clinic, Inc., provide access to health care in the Appalachian Mountain region

BEVERLY, Ky. – Accessed by winding roads, tucked away in the mountains of southeastern Kentucky is the Red Bird Dental Clinic, a beacon of hope for many residents of Clay, Bell and Leslie counties.

Geographic and economic conditions create limited access to oral health care - the next closest dentist is a 45 - 90 minute drive.

“Without Red Bird, most people here would simply have no dental care. It’s extremely important to this community,” said Revelle Berry, a long-time patient of the clinic.

More than a year ago, the [University of Louisville School of Dentistry](#) began a collaboration with the Red Bird Dental Clinic, offering a new clinical site rotation for students, while expanding Red Bird’s ability to serve more people.

“Generations of poverty have greatly exacerbated health conditions that need extensive, late-stage treatment, follow-up and support,” said Kari Collins, executive director of the Red Bird Clinic, Inc., and Red Bird Mission, Inc. “Our vision is of one of a stronger, sustainable community and UofL is an important partner in carrying out this vision.”

The Red Bird Clinic, Inc., includes both dental and medical components. It grew out of the [Red Bird Mission, Inc.](#), which started in 1921 with a private school, and expanded to include job training, clothes closet, food pantry, adult education, senior citizens services.

“The services offered through Red Bird are so important for the people of this region, and we are pleased to have UofL reach across the state to engage with us as we strive to become a healthier community,” said Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers.

“The clinical experience at Red Bird enhances the education of our students with enriching cultural and clinical practice experiences that will make them compassionate, exceptional dental health care providers,” said the dean of the UofL School of Dentistry, Gerry Bradley, B.D.S., M.S., Dr.Med.Dent.

Fourth-year dental student Sarah Jestel spent much of July at the Red Bird Dental Clinic for an Area Health Education Centers program requirement.

“The patients were so appreciative of the work we completed, especially those individuals requiring extractions,” she said. “Many came in with elevated blood pressure and had been in pain a long time.”

The students learn under the supervision of Bill Collins, D.M.D., dental director for the Red Bird Dental Clinic. Two other UofL alumni, Susan King, D.M.D. and Bob McGuinn, D.M.D., along with former dean of the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry, Sharon Turner, D.D.S., J.D., also serve on rotation as gratis faculty to oversee the UofL students.



“Students encounter varying levels of difficulty, including emergency situations and medically compromised patients. They work out of their comfort zones and increase their confidence levels and speed. They also learn practice management skills,” Dr. Collins said.

Since the collaboration started, dental students have helped provide care for almost 600 patients, and completed nearly 700 procedures for many who are uninsured or under-insured.

Individual donors like McGuinn, along with the [Good Samaritan Foundation](#) and [Delta Dental of Kentucky](#) help make it possible.

“We fully support the Red Bird Dental Clinic mission and look forward to the continued oral health benefits it will bring southeastern Kentucky,” said Delta Dental of Kentucky’s Chief Executive Officer Jude Thompson. “Without the University of Louisville, access to care would be extremely difficult, and we’re proud Louisville is represented by such an esteemed group of students.”

The use of a mobile dental unit funded by [Avēsis](#) increases the clinic’s ability to serve those without access to care. This includes a new outreach to individuals who are actively

engaged in substance use treatment. Adding oral health care helps support their efforts to achieve and maintain recovery.

“As a Kentucky Medicaid dental benefits administrator serving approximately 1.1 million children and adults, Avēsis endeavors to support new and innovative opportunities that increase access to quality dental health care across the state,” said Jerry Caudill, D.M.D., State Dental Director for Avēsis.

“It takes many partners and donors to help us address the numerous challenges facing the underserved here in Appalachia, and we are thankful to all those who give and serve here,” Collins said.

