



AUGUST 2023

Caring Community

IOWA CAREGIVERS

Thank You

FOR BEING PART OF OUR CARING COMMUNITY!

Your Support Touches the Lives of Many Who Give and Receive Care

Dear Friend,



Brush your teeth! Many of you have probably heard that message or been sharing it with family members over the years. But for me growing up poor in rural Iowa, going to the dentist was a luxury. I recall going to the dentist twice when I was a child when things had reached an emergency status. My mother told me to brush my teeth, of course, but the first time I heard the words “oral hygiene” was from my fourth-grade teacher during health class. And I sure didn’t know anyone who had braces!

The same lack of awareness about the importance of oral health to one’s overall health and well-being still exists today, and it is one reason why Iowa CareGivers’ Mouth Care Matters (MCM) program, developed in 2014, is one of our strongest and most impactful programs. The hands-on training program was initially designed for direct care workers (DCWs) such as certified nursing assistants, home care aides, direct support professionals, hospice aides and other DCWs who provide 80-90% of the direct hands-on care to Iowans of all ages and abilities in nursing homes, hospitals, group homes, the homes of persons served, and other settings. Most of those who completed the training had no idea that a “dirty mouth” could lead to heart disease and even aspiration pneumonia, a leading cause of death in nursing home residents. Graduates of the program indicated that they were going to make changes in their personal oral hygiene habits because of what they had learned.

MCM was made possible through a collaborative effort between many committed partners. Start-up and ongoing funding has been provided by Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation (DDIF); the Public Health Division of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services provided funding to develop the MCM curriculum; the University of Iowa Colleges of Nursing and Dentistry developed the curriculum; dental hygienists were trained to provide the MCM instruction; and Iowa CareGivers coordinated and administered the activities which included working with community colleges to pilot the MCM classes. Mid-Iowa Health Foundation (MIHF) and the RRF Foundation for Aging also provided funding to advance this important work.

MCM was deemed a best practice by the National Rural Health Association, and when MCM was used as an intervention project by the University of Iowa, nursing home residents where at least 50% of the certified nurse aides (CNAs) received MCM training demonstrated marked improvements in their oral health. It is vital that DCWs are equipped with the skills and knowledge to ensure that older Iowans and people with disabilities receive the best oral care possible.

DECIDING TO BE A MAJOR DONOR OF IOWA CAREGIVERS IS ABOUT THE MISSION!

When Chuck was asked why he and Kathy chose to be major donors of the Mouth Care Matters (MCM) program, he said,

“Generally I support the Iowa CareGivers mission, whatever the current topic of focus. Your programs always focus on doing the most difficult acts of caregiving in an effective and compassionate way. Iowa CareGivers always challenges caregivers to understand and accept the responsibility. Providing compassionate care is, like honesty, its own reward.”

Since MCM’s inception in 2014, many other dedicated supporters, such as Chuck and Kathy Safris—and you—have contributed to the program, further extending its reach in Iowa. For DDIF, the Safris family, our many partners, and all of you, we are profoundly thankful.



Kathy & Chuck Safris

Iowa CareGivers

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IOWA CareGivers
The go-to place for those in direct care

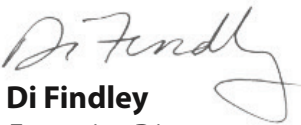
We were particularly delighted this spring, when the DDIF awarded Iowa CareGivers another \$25,000 grant that will allow us to assist community colleges in offering the MCM classes, enabling us to reach even greater numbers of DCWs across the state and, in turn, those in their care. The initiative also includes an employer MCM implementation toolkit on how to create a care culture that fully integrates oral health into their practices.

The MCM program, led by Iowa CareGivers, provides practical, hands-on skills and knowledge on how to provide the best oral care possible for Iowans of all ages and abilities and prepares providers with tools to operationalize oral health best practices.

As a committed partner, the Foundation has invested more than \$354,000 since 2014 to advance training efforts, revise with new learnings, and increase the impact of the MCM program throughout the state. Most recently, a \$25,000 grant was awarded to support integration into several systems including community colleges, The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and the College of Nursing, therefore creating greater understanding by Iowans of the importance of oral care to overall health and wellness. This aligns with the Foundation's mission to strengthen and transform the health and smiles of all Iowans and ensure oral health, including vulnerable older adults, is a priority for all Iowans."

As Iowa CareGivers continues our work that is vital to the future of our communities, state, and society, we are so grateful to have our most generous and loyal supporters like you alongside us.

Warmly,



Di Findley

Executive Director
Iowa CareGivers

Please call or email me anytime
515-249-0138 or
di.findley@iowacaregivers.org



P.S. The need for Iowa direct care workers is expected to increase 19 percent by the year 2040, which further escalates concern about the growing workforce shortage. I recently discussed who DCWs are and the services they provide, their critical role in providing care and support for older Iowans and people with disabilities, and how to learn more about direct care professions on "Mission: Employable," an Iowa Workforce Development podcast. I invite you to watch the 20-minute podcast on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvXfXnl4LE> or listen to Mission: Employable episode 159 on Apple podcasts.

To make a contribution online or by check, visit: <http://bit.ly/3dlxyjJ>



Suzanne Heckenlaible

Executive Director
Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation



"Although there is a strong correlation between poor oral health and systemic conditions, Iowa lacks a coordinated system of oral health care for older adults. Older Iowans residing in nursing facilities and homebound settings may also have immunocompromised systems and challenges accessing care. Mouth Care Matters, a competency-based oral health specialty training, was first created in 2014 and received initial support by Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation to pilot this program and important work."

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