



WEEKLY WEDNESDAY UPDATE

The Weekly Wednesday Update is our newsletter which we email every Wednesday with oral health, health and policy updates from around the state and nationally.

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**Weekly
Wednesday
Update.**



Announcing the Chairman's Award

In December Oral Health Kansas' Board President Dr. Preddis Sullivan announced the creation of the Chairman's Award. The new award recognizes a board member's outstanding achievement. In the

inaugural year, Dr. Sullivan recognized two outstanding board members who both completed their terms on the Oral Health Kansas Board at the end of 2023: Dr. Nick Rogers and Sonja Armbruster. View their accomplishments [here](#).



Welcome Two New Board Members

Oral Health Kansas is delighted to welcome two new board members this year, Dr. Charles A. Abbick, III, DDS and Debra Pochop. Dr. Abbick is a Dental Champions from Class 6, the Executive Director of Dental Services at the Salina Family Healthcare

Center, and a big cheerleader for the Conference on Oral Health (attends almost every year). Deb Pochop has been the CEO of Rawlins County Dental Clinic in Atwood for the past seven years and serves on our Sedation Dental Care Task Force. This year she was named one of 50 Kansans You Should Know by *Ingrams Magazine*. We are grateful to have Dr. Abbick and Deb's expertise on our board.



Poverty Awareness Month: Understanding the Challenges

If both parents in a family of four work full-time at minimum wage jobs in Kansas, they would be living in poverty. January is [National Poverty Awareness Month](#). Throughout this month Oral Health Kansas will share some facts about poverty, as well as some things we can do and policy solutions.

The poverty level for a family of four in Kansas is \$30,000 a year or \$2,500 per month before taxes. The average cost of living in Kansas is lower than most states, but with an average monthly rent on a two-bedroom apartment just under \$1,000, and the average monthly grocery bill at about \$1,000, it is not hard to see that a family living on minimum wage certainly is living in poverty.

About 11.5% of Kansans, or 1 in 9 Kansans live in poverty. When people have a low income they face constant decisions like whether to pay for rent or utilities or food or clothing, not to mention if they can afford a car or live close enough to access public transportation to be able to make it to work reliably.

Why do we need to think about these numbers or what people can afford if we are focused on improving people's oral health? Because people have to be able to meet their most basic needs of food, water, shelter, and clothing before they can begin to focus on their health. Even something as simple as every member of the family brushing their teeth twice a day can be insurmountable if the family is worried that their heat will be shut off tomorrow or if they can't afford toothbrushes and toothpaste.

A habit like toothbrushing is simple for many of us, but it is not achievable for far too many people. People need to be able to afford toothbrushes for each member of the family and toothpaste, and they need the mental space to make it a priority. The average tube of toothpaste costs about \$4, and a manual toothbrush can cost as much as \$3 or \$4. It's possible to find toothpaste for \$1.25 or \$2.25 at stores like Dollar General or Walmart as well as toothbrushes for \$1, but even then, a grocery budget must allow for families to purchase these items on a regular basis. Because it can be so expensive to buy toothbrushes, families often share them. This is a reality for many families, and as oral health advocates we know it puts their oral health in jeopardy.

This seems like a depressing story without a clear solution, doesn't it? So, what can we do about it? The first thing is to become aware of the crushing challenges people living in poverty face and to understand the daily stresses that may be unfamiliar to many of us. The second thing is to exercise empathy when talking with people living in poverty and to understand that everyone's ability to embrace even daily oral hygiene at home is not the same. Understanding and empathy may not be easy, but they are the most important steps toward meeting people where they are.

Let us know what you think at info@oralhealthkansas.org, and come back next week for a story about the ability to eat healthy foods.

Kansas Mission of Mercy Coming Up This Weekend

The Kansas Mission of Mercy is just around the corner! The free dental clinic will be held in Salina on January 12 and 13 at the [Tony's Pizza Event Center](#). Registration for volunteers is now closed but you can still sign up at the event. Please share the information with families or anyone that may be interested to attend as a patient. Due to the weather, they will provide a



place for patients to take overnight shelter but still encouraged to bring coat, hats and blankets. Here is some information but you can find more by clicking [here](#).

- Services are first come, first served and ALL patients must be able to wait in line - no appointments.
- The clinic opens at 5:30 AM on both Friday and Saturday. Waiting in line, or determining how early to get in line, is up to the patient.
- Be prepared to wait and potentially be there all day. It may be mid-afternoon before a patient is treated.
- After a medical screening, the patient will be examined by a dentist at KMOM and the patient's greatest need will be treated. For example, if a patient needs extractions and fillings, the greatest need (probably the extractions) will be treated at KMOM. The patient does have the option to come back the next day to get the fillings, but they must wait in line again like everybody else. No line priority is given.



February is National Children's Dental Health Month

National Children's Dental Health Month's (NCDHM) theme this year is Healthy Habits for Healthy Smiles. Attitudes and habits established at an early age are critical in maintaining good oral health throughout life. The American Dental Association has created free posters, flyers and postcards in English and Spanish as well as a Planning Guide.

The [Program Planning Guide](#) offers oral health champions resources to promote the benefits of good oral health and prevention to children. The guide includes easy-to-do activities, program planning timetable tips, a sample NCDHM proclamation and much, much more. To view the resources, click [here](#).

Oral Health Kansas has a list of oral health Tips and Tricks one pager hand outs ranging from Baby's 1st year to thumbsucking and even braces. Visit our [website](#) for a list of Tips and Tricks. We also have [Sugary Drink Displays](#) available for reservations.



Upcoming Events

- Course: An Introduction to Value-Based Care in Oral Health: Moving from Volume to Value, 1 CE. Click [here](#) for the course information.
- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- Missouri Oral Health Policy Conference, March 7-8, 2024, DoubleTree by Hilton, Jefferson City, Missouri. Register [here](#).
- **Save the date!** 2024 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 8.



We are mourning the loss of a champion in the Kansas oral health community, Heather Samuel. She was a dental hygiene instructor at Johnson County Community College for 30



years and founded the "Oral Health on Wheels" program to bring dental care to underserved communities in the Kansas City Area. In 2011, Oral Health Kansas recognized her achievements with the Outstanding Dental Hygienist Award. Heather was a good friend and colleague to us for many years. We are grateful for her service to the oral health community, and we send her friends and family our sympathies. Read more in [Heather's obituary](#).



Sugary Drink Display

We have Adult and Children's Sugary Drink Display's available for reservations. These displays are eye catching at exhibits, schools, library, dental offices, clinics and just about anywhere you see them!

We only have a limited amount so please sign up soon if you're interested in reserving one.
Click [here](#) to learn more about sugary drink display reservations!

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