

# the smile

Spring 2026

## PATIENT STORIES

### The Boy with the Spider-Man Toothbrush

Eight-year-old Jhordy's mom noticed something was wrong when she spotted swelling in her son's mouth. Worried about infection, she brought him to a discounted community clinic where they received some tough news. Jhordy had several severely decayed teeth that couldn't be restored. And even at a reduced price, the family couldn't afford the cost of treatment. They were referred to Salt Lake Donated Dental Services (SLDDS), a recipient of a Three Year Access to Care Grant from the AAPD Foundation. This \$225,000 grant is contributing to SLDDS's Pediatric Sedation Program. Of course, not every pediatric patient requires sedation services. But when a young patient needs extensive care, the only way SLDDS can complete all necessary dental treatments to restore their oral health is through general anesthesia. Each child is first seen by a general dentist at the SLDDS clinic for a sedation evaluation. There, they determine whether IV sedation will be required or if treatment can be completed without. When sedation is recommended, staff take time to walk parents through every step, making sure families feel confident and children stay safe.

When Jhordy arrived at the clinic, the SLDDS team got to work. A dentist prescribed Jhordy an antibiotic to fight the infection and coordinated with a board-certified pediatric dentist and anesthesiologist to get him scheduled for comprehensive care. In a single appointment, the team completed five extractions, three fillings, three sealants, a cleaning, and topical fluoride – over \$3,400 in treatment that cost the family just a fraction of that price.

At Jhordy's post-op visit, his gums were healing beautifully. His dental hygienist walked the family through proper brushing



**Jhordy was able to heal because of the patience, support, and resources of his community – resources that only exist because of compassionate folks like you. YOU transform our mission from an idea to reality.**



**The AAPD Foundation is proud to support Salt Lake Donated Dental Services and the work they do for kids in Utah, and we hope you are too!**



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and flossing techniques, talked about keeping up with regular visits, and scheduled him for a six-month comprehensive exam and cleaning appointment. Then she handed Jhordy a goodie bag complete with an electric toothbrush featuring his favorite superhero. That little light inside of Jhordy, the one that pain had threatened to dim, was shining bright!

**Big News!**

## Announcing 2026-2027 Access to Care Grant Recipients

Twenty-three organizations have been selected to receive a One Year Access to Care Grant! These dental grants, worth up to \$30,000, fund community-based initiatives in the U.S. that provide care to underserved children. Across all twenty-six funded projects, a clear and urgent picture emerges: millions of children in America – from rural Louisiana and Midwest community centers to Brooklyn schoolyards and Los Angeles clinics – are growing up without access to basic oral healthcare, held back by poverty, language barriers, lack of insurance, geography, and disability.

Our 2026-2027 grantees are tackling these barriers in creative and wide-ranging ways, from mobile dental vans pulling up directly to schools and FQHCs extending clinic hours into early mornings and evenings so parents don't have to miss work to bilingual teams serving immigrant communities in their own languages and specially designed sensory-friendly treatment spaces for children with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities. Several programs are pushing into particularly underserved territory – a pediatric oncology dental rotation for children undergoing cancer treatment, dedicated care for kids with cleft and craniofacial conditions, and a rural Louisiana clinic serving a community where more than half of third-graders have untreated cavities.

Bottom line: these clinics provide comprehensive, compassionate care to children from diverse backgrounds, regardless of citizenship, insurance status or families' ability to pay. They will utilize AAPD Foundation support to continue fighting barriers to dental care and making a positive impact on children in their communities.



## The Foundation is proud to announce the following recipients:

### Bellefaire JCB

Shaker Heights, OH

### Bethesda Health Clinic

Tyler, TX

### Brooker Memorial Pediatric Dental Center

Torrington, CT

### Community Dental Care

Maplewood, MN

### Conway Regional Health Foundation

Conway, AR

### CrossOver Healthcare Ministry

Richmond, VA

### Ezra Medical Center

Brooklyn, NY

### Gracelight Community Health

Los Angeles, CA

### Healthcare Network

Immokalee, FL

### JPCHC Foundation, Inc.

Indianapolis, IN

### Kennebec Valley Family Dentistry

Augusta, ME

### LevelUp Kids, Inc.

Kansas City, MO

### Little Lights Dentistry

Stuart, FL

### Mercy Health Foundation Washington

Washington, MO

### Open Arms Free Clinic, Inc.

Elkhorn, WI

### OVP Health Care, Inc.

Proctorville, OH

### Promise Community Health Center

Sioux Center, IA

### Reeves Memorial Medical Center Foundation

Bernice, LA

### The C. W. Williams Community Health Center, Inc.

Charlotte, NC

### The Research Foundation of SUNY Stony Brook

Stony Brook, NY

### University of Louisville Foundation

Louisville, KY

### University of Minnesota Cleft and Craniofacial Clinic

Minneapolis, MN

### University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry

Oklahoma City, OK



## Do you provide dental care for families in need in a 501(c)(3) setting?

If yes, you can apply for an Access to Care Grant!

Next call for applications

is in July 2026. Visit

[aapdfoundation.org/types-of-grants/](https://aapdfoundation.org/types-of-grants/) to learn more.

## Mr. Ernesto Hart

WINNER OF THE 2026 DR. BEVERLY A. LARGENT ACCESS TO CARE INNOVATOR AWARD

### Congratulations to Mr. Ernesto Hart from The Floating Hospital!

Sponsored by Elevate Oral Care, The Dr. Beverly A. Largent Access to Care Innovator Award recognizes excellence in providing dental care to children, especially vulnerable populations. The ideal recipient is creative, committed, and works to help as many children as possible, often with limited resources. The award is named for Dr. Beverly Largent, the first woman president of the AAPD Foundation and trailblazer pediatric dentist.

Mr. Ernesto Hart is our 2026 Access to Care Innovator! Over 34 years, he transformed The Floating Hospital's dental program from a modest, ship-based screening service into a fully equipped, high-capacity clinic serving thousands of NYC's most vulnerable children. Working with complex populations – migrants, domestic violence survivors, children with disabilities – he understood that overcoming trauma and anxiety was just as important as clinical excellence. Those who know Mr. Hart describe him as the "heart" of The Floating Hospital.



**The AAPD Foundation is proud to award Mr. Ernesto Hart! He will receive \$10,000 for The Floating Hospital that may be applied for any expense in support of access to dental care.**

Sponsored by  **elevate**  
ORAL CARE®

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## U.S. child oral health is under attack

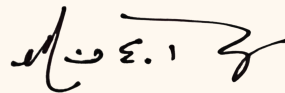
Across the country, children's oral health is facing a growing and deeply concerning threat. In just the past year, we have seen efforts to discredit the effectiveness of fluoride, coupled with sweeping Medicaid eligibility changes that took effect last summer. Together, these developments have created a slow moving but undeniable crisis that could leave **20 million children** without access to the care they need. **Child oral health is under attack**, and the consequences will be felt for years to come.

As the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry continues its work helping pediatric dentists navigate these challenges, educating the public, and guiding policymakers, the **AAPD Foundation** remains steadfast in its mission: supporting the nonprofit and dental school clinics that care for our nation's most vulnerable children. **Access to care is at the heart of everything we do.**

Since 2010, we've awarded funding to **189 nonprofit and dental school clinics** and received funding requests from more than 1,200 other organizations delivering dental care to children in need. We are profoundly aware of the limited resources and pressures these clinics face every day and the dire need to support them. Grants go directly toward patient care or help remove barriers by funding community outreach workers, extending weekend and evening hours, or providing transportation to appointments. We are proud to support our grantees – but the reality is our grants represent only a small portion of total clinic revenue. On average, two-thirds of funding for nonprofit and dental school clinics depends on **Medicaid reimbursement and other federal sources**. As recent Medicaid changes take hold, the number of uninsured children will climb while clinic capacity shrinks. Community clinics may be forced to close altogether.

In response, the Foundation has set aside **\$4 million** in emergency Bridge Grants to help clinics weather revenue gaps caused by federal cuts. But even so, **this funding will only begin to address the need.**

We know this crisis will continue to unfold over months and years. **We need your help** to protect the child oral health safety net. **Together, we will ensure that thousands of children continue to receive the care they deserve – and demonstrate that pediatric dentists always put children first.**



–Mario Ramos, DMD



HEALTHY SMILE HEROES IN FLORIDA

## A site visit to Caridad Center

In March, the AAPD Foundation visited Caridad Center, an Access to Care Grant recipient located in Boynton Beach, FL. The clinic offers comprehensive health and dental care services to Palm Beach communities that have historically been excluded from high-quality care. Caridad's vision is to eliminate the cycle of poverty for the families they serve. Their pediatric dental program provides continuous, comprehensive, and family-centered care for young patients.

### The Access to Care Grant!

The Foundation awarded Caridad Center a Three Year Access to Care Grant that is funding an additional pediatric dentist on staff, allowing the clinic to expand hours of operation for pediatric appointments on Saturdays so children do not have to miss school to receive care.

**Thank you to the Caridad Center staff for showing us around the clinic and for the compassionate care you provide the community! The AAPD Foundation is proud to support this vital safety-net clinic.**



(From L to R) Kevin Thomas, donor; Rosa Lores, Caridad Chief Administrator Officer; Kyle Malone, AAPD Foundation Major Gifts Manager; Dr. Maria Portilla, Pediatric Dentist at Caridad funded by Access to Care Grant; Dr. Larry Lipton, donor; Laura Kallus, Caridad Chief Executive Officer.

### What is a site visit?

A tour of a grantee clinic and a look at the amazing work they do! AAPD Foundation supporters local to the Access to Care Grant recipient clinic are invited to see firsthand the positive impact of donations.

- Are you interested in attending a site visit in the future?
- Would you like to volunteer at a nonprofit dental clinic nearby?

Email **Kyle Malone** at [kmalone@aapdfoundation.org](mailto:kmalone@aapdfoundation.org) for more information.



# Share Healthy Smiles Beyond the Chair: The Hero Library

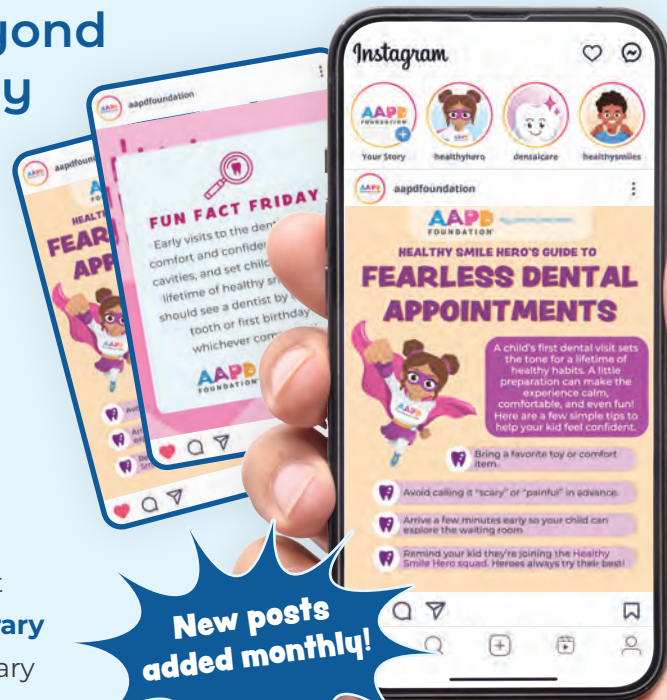
You have exclusive access to the Hero Library filled with downloadable tools that help kids build healthy habits and celebrate every dental win.

In addition to printable activities, brushing charts, and certificates, the Library includes ready-to-post social graphics and captions to help your practice stay consistent, visible, and family-friendly online in just a few clicks.



Scan the QR code or check out [aapdfoundation.org/hero-library](https://aapdfoundation.org/hero-library) to gain access to the Hero Library

Use Password: **Hero1**



New posts added monthly!



SMALL BATCH, BIG IMPACT

## One Barrel Challenge

It's our mission to help every kid get access to dental care. A very special dentist with a heart for kids (and a taste for a good Pinot!) is helping make it happen. It's the One Barrel Challenge, and **100% of the proceeds go to the AAPD Foundation!**

Dr. Elise McCollum has always been deeply involved in her community, especially in children's advocacy – she knows that setting kids up with good dental habits early is important. She understands how tough it can be for families across the country to access the dental care and education their children need.

Wine is for grown-ups, but healthy smiles are for everyone!



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**The AAPD Foundation does such a phenomenal job locating populations that need help and advocating for care for the populations that need it the most.**

Dr. Elise McCollum



THE IDEA

**A single barrel of wine can make a big difference in the world**



Each winery crafted just **ONE barrel** for this special project: Adelsheim made a 2021 Pinot Noir and McCollum Heritage 91 crafted a 2021 Chardonnay.



So when she and her husband had the chance to support a charity through their winery, choosing the AAPD Foundation was a no-brainer for her.

Dr. McCollum and her husband, CJ McCollum of the Washington Wizards, started their own winery, **McCollum Heritage 91**. For the One Barrel Challenge, they teamed up with Adelsheim, one of the Willamette Valley's pioneering wineries.

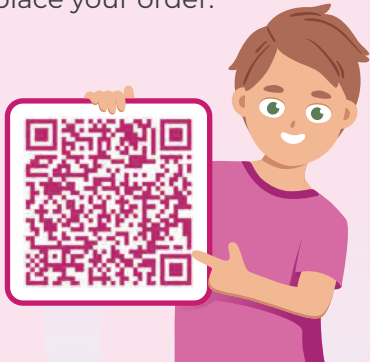


**Every Sip Helps Create Healthier, Brighter Futures for Children**

Both wines are available together in a special, limited-release curated 6-pack. And here's the best part: **100% of the proceeds go to the AAPD Foundation!**

## You can help – and taste amazing wine!

If you're 21+, love great wine AND helping kids, this is your moment. Scan the QR code to visit the McCollum Heritage 91 website to place your order.



**We are so grateful to Dr. Elise McCollum and CJ McCollum for using their talents and success to help kids in need. This is what community looks like – people from all walks of life coming together to make a difference.**



## Grant Reviewers Needed!

Now seeking dental professionals and healthcare workers to review Access to Care Grant applications! In this volunteer role, grant reviewers evaluate applications against grant standards and complete evaluation forms.

### Training and Time Commitment



**One-Hour Remote  
Training Session**



**Review 15-25  
Applications**  
(30 minutes each)

### Interested?

Scan the QR code to sign up.

Grant application reviewing period is between September and November

