Dental clinic serves CG students

By Caitlyn May
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More than 6,000 students. Nearly 2,000 appointments. Just over 100 clinic days. $540,345 in dental work. Those are the three-year stats for the South Lane Children's Dental Clinic

"There is no other school district in the area that hosts a volunteer dental clinic," program coordinator, Jackie Lester said. That, is part of the problem.

The South Lane Children's Dental Clinic will not turn away a child in pain. It's primary patient group, however, is made up of low-income students who qualify for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) with 90 percent of the students seen at the clinic, already assigned to a provider. Those providers, though, have months-long waiting lists and can often be located in Eugene. According to Lester, that's a driving force behind many of the appointments at the clinic: driving.

"There are a few reasons why kids aren't getting to their providers," Lester said. "They can't get there, their parents can't take off work, their OHP isn't current, they don't know who their OHP provider is or there's at least a four-month wait."

South Lane Children's Dental helps fill in the gaps in treatment. Since it started in 2012, it has served 7,569 children; 6,736 screenings and 833 treatments. Currently, the program is screening all students between 6th and 12th grade which includes applying fluoride and sealants with parental permission. With a shift in priority, the number of students served, may increase.

According to Lester, the clinic is planning to do more screening work to combat the need to perform more direct dental work. Lester told the South Lane School Board earlier this year that the original goal of the clinic was to treat as many students as possible. However, this year the clinic will shift to screening and applying sealants and fluoride as preventative measures-the hope being that the need for dental procedures will decrease.

Lester says there's a strong correlation between age and the number of sealant applications performed. Younger children, who would benefit in high school from having the procedure, receive it in fewer numbers than high schoolers.

"The permission slip gets lost, it never gets to mom and dad," Lester said. "Few elementary students get the fluoride or sealant."

More children, however, are getting seen by a dentist. Lester attributes part of the clinic's success to the transportation service that picks children up from school, brings them to the clinic and then returns them to school, eliminating a costly day off work for parents and a trip up Interstate-5 to Eugene. That doesn't mean, however, that the clinic doesn't encourage families to use their OHP providers.

"We do outreach to overcome barriers to getting to the provider," she said, noting that the staff with do home visits to walk a family through the OHP process.

Currently, the clinic is funded through a three-year grant from the Oregon Community Foundation. That grant, is in its final year. According to Lester, future funding options are being explored, but the clinic isn't going anywhere.

While South Lane Children's Dental Clinic serves children who are already assigned a provider, it is able to recoup some of the funds.

"Let's look at who's responsible for providing the treatment," Lester said. "If that's OHP, what is missing and what can we support to access services that are being paid for."

City council honors state champions

The Cottage Grove City Council honored the Cottage Grove Lions during its Monday, Nov. 27 meeting. The Lions brought home the school's first ever state championship title garnering city-wide attention. The council chambers were standing room only Monday night with a line of residents flooding city hall's lobby for a chance to witness the proclamation given by Cottage Grove Mayor Jeff Gowing.

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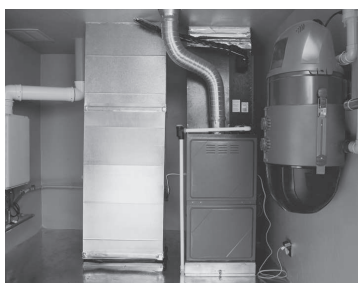
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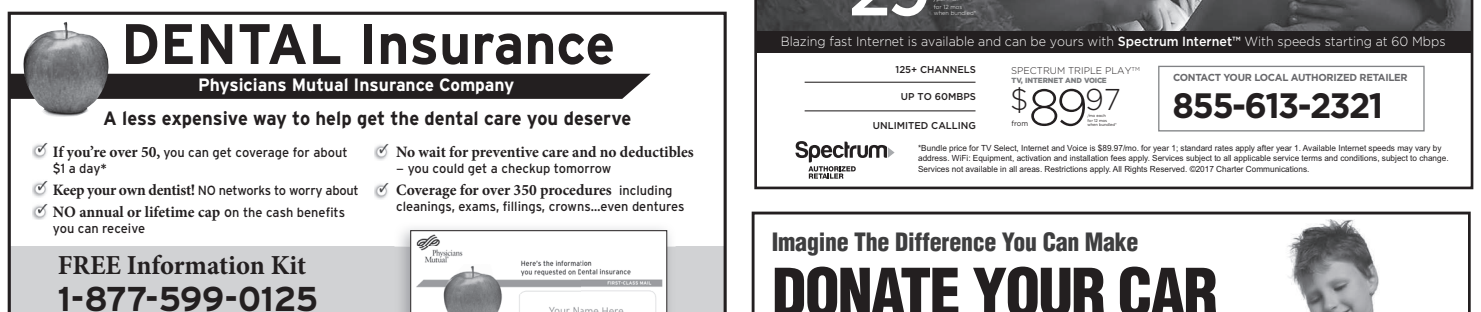

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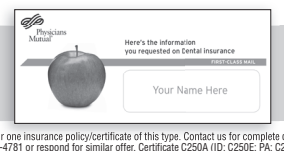

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