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THE VALUE OF GIVING BACK: AN ORAL SURGEON'S PERSPECTIVE ON VOLUNTEERING IN VIRGINIA'S FREE CLINICS

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THE VALUE OF GIVING BACK:

AN ORAL SURGEON'S PERSPECTIVE ON VOLUNTEERING IN VIRGINIA'S FREE CLINICS

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I read with interest the recent article by Mr. Rufus Phillips regarding the state of volunteering in Virginia's free and charitable clinics. It concerns me that volunteers are down by 50% in Virginia's clinics from 2018 to 2022.

I thought I would share my experience providing volunteer services as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon in my community. I would ask you to consider printing my comments in a future *Virginia Dental Journal* so that other colleagues can better understand the benefits to their community (and the providers themselves) by volunteering at a free and charitable clinic.

I have considered it a privilege to donate specialized surgical care to those less fortunate in our community. I have volunteered as an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, primarily at the Park Place Dental Clinic in Norfolk, Virginia, and through the Missions of Mercy program.

As life got busier with my family and my own private practice, several years ago I offered to see patients from the Park Place Clinic in my private practice office. This has been a win-win all around. I see these patients in my office. My team helps with their care. We use our own equipment, which we are obviously comfortable with. This process is efficient and not detrimental to the production of our practice.

My team and I feel grateful to have been able to donate approximately \$50,000 of free surgical care over the past several years to patients in need.

My team enjoys this aspect of our practice as well and it contributes to good vibes in the office.

"I would ask my dental colleagues to consider volunteering at your local free clinic. To those already doing so, I commend you."

I would ask my dental colleagues to consider volunteering at your local free clinic. To those already doing so, I commend you.

Alternatively, ask your local free clinic to send patients to your office, as we have done. I have found providing volunteer care to those patients in need in my office to be fulfilling, efficient, and easy.



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