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## MDA Foundation: MDA Foundation Teams Up with Victors for Veterans Program

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# MDA Foundation Teams Up with Victors for Veterans Program

By Anne Berquist  
Foundation Director of Development

Helping disabled, homeless, or uninsured veterans who have incomes at or below 200% of federal poverty level receive the dental care they desperately need is the purpose of an alliance between the University of Michigan School of Dentistry and the VINA Community Dental Center in Brighton. This program is called Victors for Veterans, or V4V, and it was established in 2012.

The VINA clinic is the second V4V site, and it opened in October 2020 to serve veterans in southeast Michigan free of charge. Securing the VINA Clinic site was initially made possible by a \$45,000, three-year MDA Foundation grant. Veterans from Livingston, Oakland, Genesee, Jackson, Shiawassee, Ingham, and Washtenaw counties are seen at VINA, which is an acronym for vision, integrity, need and action.

The MDA Foundation recently approved another three-year grant for the clinic totaling \$50,000. Grant funds are used to rent clinic space for the 18 days the V4V program operates in that facility every year. Thirty to 60 veterans

Participating students volunteer their time and dental skills for the four years of their dental education, and completing their commitment is required for graduation.

are treated annually, receiving comprehensive dentistry that may include exams, radiographs, cleanings, scaling, root planing, fluoride and silver diamine fluoride treatment, extractions, implants, oral surgery, root canals, fillings, dentures, partials, crowns, bridges, and bite splints. V4V participants must commit to keeping all appointments at the clinic as well as when they are referred to specialists or be expelled from the program. V4V is not affiliated with the Veterans Administration.

School of Dentistry faculty member Dr. Howard Hamerink, associate director of community-based collaborative care and education and V4V program director, explains that a team of four students organized, researched and advocated for the Livingston County site as part of the school's Pathways Program, which requires students to complete a research-related project in an area of special interest to them. Dr. Kelly Chick, Dr. Chrissy Gauss, Dr. Lauren Hensick, and Dr. Hayley Laird Popp began working on the project as first-year dental students. As they graduated dental school in 2021, they were treating patients in the clinic they helped create.

The V4V program requires participating students to volunteer their time and dental skills for the four years of their dental education, and completing their commitment is required for graduation. V4V currently has 40 D2, D3, and D4 students in the program, with another 16 to 18 from the D1 class coming in April 2024. The program relies on volunteer precept dentists to oversee patient care and treatment. Precepts must be appointed as University of Michigan School of Dentistry faculty before they can participate



**At clinic** – A Victors for Veterans volunteer treats a patient at the VINA Clinic in Brighton.



**U-M volunteers** – University of Michigan Victors for Veterans Program volunteers include dentist precepts and U-M dental students.

in the community based continuing education program. Hamerink noted that Drs. Mark Migdal and William Metz were the first two faculty member volunteers at VINA.

“We have V4V clinics in Traverse City, Brighton, and

Pontiac, and have a huge need for precept dentists for the Pontiac location especially,” Hamerink said. “All our volunteer dentists are MDA members. I encourage any MDA member in southeast Michigan who may be retired or cutting back on practice days to contact me to volunteer as a precept. We cannot deliver care without dentists to oversee and administer clinics. We have 13 volunteer MDA doctors serving at the three clinics, but we do need more dentists to help.”

By providing facility fees for the VINA Clinic on behalf of V4V, the MDA Foundation helps expose dental students to MDA dentists and organized dentistry and acquaints them with the charitable arm of the MDA. Your donations to the MDA Foundation enable it to help those desperately in need of care. When your MDA membership dues invoice arrives, please check the box to donate to the MDA Foundation. Your generosity will help change the lives of thousands of people, including those who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country. ●

*To volunteer your service to V4V, email Dr. Hamerink at [hahdds@umich.edu](mailto:hahdds@umich.edu). He welcomes your outreach.*



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