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MDA Foundation: MDA Foundation Grant Helps HUDA Clinic Celebrate 20 Years of Service

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By Anne Berquist
Foundation Director of Development

MDA Foundation Grant Helps HUDA Clinic Celebrate 20 Years of Service

Nestled near the Lodge/Davison freeway interchange in Detroit is the HUDA Clinic, Michigan's largest clinic providing free medical, dental, vision, mental health, and specialty care services to uninsured and underinsured people. HUDA is celebrating its 20th anniversary this month and has ambitious plans to provide expanded dental services to those in need.

Originally located on Davison Avenue (thus named Health Unit on Davison Avenue), in 2012 the facility relocated to a larger space on nearby Woodrow Wilson Street, but retained its well-known name. Three years later, as HUDA Executive Director Tracy Wilson says, an area dentist, Dr. Shakeel Niazi, felt it was his humanitarian obligation to donate operatory equipment to enable the clinic to add dental services.

Currently, there are two dental operatories at HUDA, and dental services are provided most Saturdays. In 2023, the MDA Foundation issued a \$10,000 grant to the HUDA Clinic for lab fees to provide partials, purchase consumable supplies, pay for equipment repairs, and fund secondary/ancillary staff costs. HUDA's dental operating budget is about \$20,000 annually and the Foundation's funding does make an impact.

"Ultimately, my goal is to provide dental services every day the clinic is open," Wilson says. "Dental services are the most-requested of all services we provide, and we nearly always have a three-month wait list." She says dental patients often are at 350% of federal poverty level and many are senior citizens with no dental coverage. Medicare eligibility rollbacks are also creating a big demand for dental services.

Within a year, Wilson expects the clinic's dental area to double in size, adding a third operatory and enlarging existing operatories to accommodate family members who often are needed to translate for patients, as well as preceptors to oversee student dentists. Students in the clubs at the University of Detroit Mercy Dental School and the

University of Michigan Dental School have historically donated time to the clinic. She hopes HUDA will become a clinical site for the nearby Detroit Mercy Dental School, so students can participate during the week as well as vol-

unteer on random Saturdays. She says Wayne County Community College is also interested in being a clinical site for its dental hygiene students. "Ultimately, we want the students to return to us as volunteers," Wilson observes. Federal grant dollars are being used for this expansion.

Last year HUDA Clinic provided 263 patients with 51 fillings, 28 extractions, 27 partials, 91 exams, one root canal, many hygiene visits and deep cleanings, and six emergency walk-in services. Wilson says the need for dental services is tremendous, and the patients who are treated are overwhelmingly grateful for the care they receive.

HUDA Clinic welcomes more clinical volunteers. It would also like to find a local lab that would provide dentures at a charitable cost for the clinic's patients. "We have numerous patients, especially seniors, who are in need of partials and dentures," Wilson says, "but we need a local source for dentures."

In 2021, HUDA Clinic reported a total of 1,045 patients for all services combined. Of those reporting ethnicity, 541 were African American; 209 were South Asian/Asian; 113 were Caucasian; 61 were Arab/Middle Eastern; and 43 were Hispanic or Latino.

Congratulations to the HUDA Clinic on 20 years of serving the underserved with compassionate and quality care! Those interested in volunteering at the HUDA Clinic or donating supplies or lab services may call 313-865-8446, or visit hudaclinic.org and click on the appropriate tab. ●



HUDA Clinic in Detroit.