



**Williamsburg Health Foundation's 2018 Annual Award
Celebrates Local Groups and Virginia-Wide Coalition
for their Contributions to Oral Health Care**

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WILLIAMSBURG – On October 17, 2018, the Williamsburg Health Foundation presented its annual award to the Virginia Oral Health Coalition, which raises awareness about the need for oral health delivery systems in Virginia. The 2018 annual award event also gave special recognition to local provider groups that provide no-cost or low-cost oral health services to those who need it. These organizations include Child Development Resources, Lackey Clinic, Norge Dental Center, Olde Towne Medical & Dental Center, and Thomas Nelson Community College.

“Oral health is a critical component of overall health and well-being, but well established systems to support oral health are lacking which illustrates the significance of how poorly understood the importance of oral health is,” said Carol L. Sale, president and CEO of the Williamsburg Health Foundation. “We hope the 2018 annual award will help raise awareness of the issue and to celebrate all of those individuals and groups working to provide desperately needed oral healthcare and education.”

In a video featured at the breakfast and available online at www.williamsburghealthfoundation.org, experts explained the critical connection between oral health and overall physical and mental health and total well-being as well as the need to examine the current limited reimbursement structures for oral healthcare.

Dr. William Griffin, DDS, Dental Director at Lackey Clinic pointed out that bacteria in the mouth can “stir up trouble in the rest of the body [and lead to] various systemic

diseases” and that individuals who have dental pain or other dental complications are less likely to smile and can have lower self-esteem which takes a toll on their mental health as well. At local safety net clinics, professionals work to integrate all aspects of healthcare since all aspects of health connect.

Harold Marioneaux, Jr., DDS, Dental Hygiene Director at Thomas Nelson Community College, pointed out gaps in public insurance systems designed to care for Americans and their health. “Dentistry is not part of the Affordable Care Act. If you’re a veteran, you get medical, but you don’t get dental. Medicare will take care of medical, but it won’t take care of dental.”

According to Sarah Bedard Holland, CEO of Virginia Oral Health Care Coalition, “From a macro perspective, it is very difficult for adults without dental coverage to access dental services. Without a reimbursement source, it is very difficult for dentists to provide care to those who need it.”

But, Ms. Holland said, “The Williamsburg community could be an exemplar for the state if not the nation” due to its integration of dental and medical care in its safety-net clinics. It is also clear that the Greater Williamsburg community has many individuals volunteering their time to provide oral care to those who need it. One group recognized, Norge Dental Center, is a private dental practice that annually provides free care to as many individuals as it can see in a day.

“We know that Norge Dental Center is one of many private dental practices that donate time and expertise to care for impoverished patients who need oral care. We wish we could recognize each and every one of those practices,” said Clarence Wilson, chair of the annual awards committee of the board of trustees. Norge is an example of individuals and businesses coming forward to care for their neighbors in need. Norge Dental and other businesses show the best of our community and the helping hands in it,” said Wilson.

The Williamsburg Health Foundation’s serves the cities of Williamsburg and Poquoson and the counties of York and James City. The Foundation has a corpus of 122 million dollars and distributes an average of five million dollars annually and works with multiple partners to reach its vision of “individuals making healthy choices in a community with health opportunity for all.” For more information on the Williamsburg Health Foundation, visit its website at WilliamsburgHealthFoundation.org

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