

## **VOICE Seeks \$100,000 Matching Grant for a Full-Time Dentist to Help Western Fairfax County Residents Fill This Empty Dental Chair for Two Years**



### **Background:**

VOICE is a broad-based, multi-issue, multi-faith, non-partisan citizens' organization working to make change on social justice issues affecting the lives of low and middle income residents in Northern Virginia. VOICE member congregation, St. John Neumann of Reston, with 12,000 members, hosted a listening session for families during the fall of this year. A dominant theme shared by participants was the lack of affordable dental care. VOICE documented numerous examples of negative impacts resulting from lack of affordable care:

- Utilizing unlicensed dentists resulting in poor service, sometimes ending with hospitalization. A root canal performed in the kitchen of a mother's apartment.
- Extraction of the wrong teeth.
- Missing work due to acute pain and the fear of missing work resulting in the inability to function effectively in the workplace.
- Job discrimination based on appearance from poor/no dental support.
- Dental bills, sometimes higher than 20%-30% of annual income resulting in hunger and displacement.
- Loss of pride in the inability to meet one's family dental needs.

### **Action to date:**

St. John Neumann members, along with support from other VOICE member congregations in Western Fairfax researched possible answers to lack of affordable dental care. This issue is well

documented in the recent “Community Health Survey for Fairfax Area” that determined households with an annual income under \$50,000 identified dental health as one of the most important health related issues. VOICE leaders visited the Northern Virginia Dental Clinic (NVDC) in Sterling, learning from the clinic director that four dental chairs and state of the art equipment was available and needed volunteer and paid dentists to operate at the maximum capacity; the clinic has one part-time paid dentist and relies on dentists to volunteer their time. When NVDC Sterling opened, a waiting list of 300 people came forward, indicating the dental challenges in our communities. Next VOICE met with the Northern Virginia Dental Society – the Society has partnered with VOICE to reach out to area dentists to expand volunteerism and VOICE member congregations have recruited dentists within their respective congregations.

**VOICE half way to generating support to hiring dentist for 2012-2013:**

More effort was needed to make maximum use of NVDC Sterling facilities and serve adults in Fairfax County. VOICE leaders have been offered a \$100,000 anonymous challenge grant, that when matched, will enable Sterling NVDC to hire a full time dentist (32 hours/week) who would serve western Fairfax County residents for whom the Sterling facility would be more convenient. Having a full-time dentist (in addition to volunteer dentists) will result in more consistent treatment planning and greater continuity of care for all patients. NVDC Sterling and VOICE leaders anticipate that this paid position would serve an estimated 8 patients per day, with the exception of days when new patient exams are conducted when an estimated 14 patients would be seen. Thus an estimated 1,500+ appointments would be provided on an annual basis.

A total of \$200,000 would cover the cost of hiring the dentist for a two-year period. Other expenses would be covered by fees and other NVDC Sterling clinic income. A modest fee of \$40 per appointment is directed for this purpose.

**Help fill the dental chair and support expanded coverage for Western Fairfax County:**

VOICE is seeking matching funds from potential private sources including:

INOVA Health Care Systems----Donated \$10,000

Northern Virginia Family Services

Reston Hospital

Delta Dental Virginia---Donated \$20,000

Northern Virginia Health Foundation

Private sector supporters will be invited to a public ribbon cutting ceremony and asked to celebrate with VOICE clergy and leaders who have prayed and worked together to bring this effort half way to success.