



NEWSLETTER

Dear SDF Supporter,

It's the most wonderful time of the year. Well it was, and now it's a whole new year!

The Special Day Foundation 2023-2024 fiscal year has been rolling since July 2023 and it's just as busy as the last. We couldn't be more proud as to what all of our partners have achieved in just 6 months.

See below for the details of this year thus far.

Healthy changes are always happening thanks to your support!



Contact Info

Remember, we can be reached by phone at (941) 225-3103, by e-mail at info@specialdayfoundation.org, Facebook, or by mail at:

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[Visit our website](#)



The 2023-2024 fiscal year has begun and all of our residents continue to learn a lot when it comes to treating our special needs community. Their work ethic and dedication ramped up treatment needs and accomplishments. This year the Community Outreach Dental Program at the University of Florida Dental Clinic in Seminole, has begun by funding treatment for about 150 patients!

In the last 6 months over 950 dental procedures were completed! The dental care provided varied between exams, x-rays, fillings, extractions, crowns, implants, dentures, IV sedation, dental hygiene recall visits and so much more. In addition to the invaluable hands on experience the residents receive, they also learn how to better manage behavior and treatment options for special needs patient's through speakers such as CARD (Center for Autism Related Disabilities) and other adjunct Doctors from all over the state/country. The Community Outreach Dental Hygienist, Whitney, continues to provide dental offsite visits, with this year having about 30 participants each month, totaling to over 100 offsite visits thus far. These visits allow participants to receive one-on-one attention in dental hygiene home care education as well as obtain a fluoride treatment, once a month. Whitney also provides dental hygiene education for staff at group homes and ADT programs as well as teach-ins at special needs schools.

Remember, this program provides oral hygiene training, dental screenings, and serves as a referral source to the University of Florida Dental Clinics for treatment. So if you know anyone in need please do not hesitate to make a referral.

This years licensed dental residents at the University of Florida Dental Clinic in Seminole, continue to provide customized care specific to patient's with special needs. With over 500 dental appointments completed in the last 6 months, the dental residents have done an amazing job tailoring dental care to each patient's individual needs. Professional staff are trained in IV sedation, general anesthesia, and general management of special needs patients, allowing the

clinic to provide safe treatment to many people with developmental disabilities. We continue to provide SDF participants with a new Sonicare Electric Toothbrush, toothbrush head refills, Water-piks to ortho patients and prescription oral care products specific to each patient's need! Participants are provided with oral hygiene education that encompasses tooth brushing, flossing and tools for easier at home oral hygiene care.

Whitney visits several group homes and Adult Day Training programs to provide these hygiene services as well. If you would like Whitney to provide training or educational materials at your facility please contact us!

Please see below for an update on our Hialeah and Naples dental programs.

Our Adapted Fishing continues to be a welcomed change of pace for our hard working participants and families. We have made many new friends over the past 6 months. We receive many new anglers because of referrals from others. It is the biggest complement we could receive knowing that many of you enjoy fishing so much that you would refer us to your friends. Thank you! As 2024 begins, we look forward to seeing new faces on the boat. Our Anglers continue to be of all ages and come from many parts of Florida. We continue to offer trips 7 days per week so that many working families are able to join us on the water. Our two launch sites are Bradenton Beach or Sarasota.

Remember that no individual fishing licenses are required and all life vests, fishing equipment, bait and bottled water are provided. We love to take out new people, especially those who have never fished or been on a boat before, so please give us a call!

At your request, Captain Mark will provide information about the local ecology and how we can all better support a healthy environment. Please see the link below for more information on all our programs.

Have a safe and fun New Year!

Sincerely,
The Special Day Crew

[Refer a participant](#)



How to Make A Visit to the Dentist More Successful

Start at home – at any age practicing basic necessities such as toothbrushing, flossing, sitting back in a chair, practicing under a bright light, counting teeth, etc. can all provide positive reinforcements for preparation of going to the dentist.

- Toothbrushing should start as soon as the first tooth is in the mouth. But don't worry, even if your loved one is older, it's never too late to start. Begin with very simple introductions. Something as simple as allowing he/she to hold the toothbrush. This may need to occur over several attempts, before moving on to a

new step such as placing the toothbrush in to the mouth, but you as the care taker and your loved one can determine when that time is right. As time goes on, new tasks can be implemented.

- Combine brushing with other daily tasks, such as bath time, or tv time, or any other activity your loved one finds enjoyable.
- Keep in mind that when first beginning, practicing should be done in a comfortable environment. Such as on a favorite blanket or chair and a visual distraction may be implemented when transitioning to the parent/caretaker brushing.
- As progression happens – hand over hand techniques can be implemented as well as turn-taking: to help build independent skills and confidence.

As your loved one blossoms into their comfort zone, you will decide on when you think it's time for a trip to the dentist. Here are a few tips/strategies to help with preparation and ideal settings.

1. Establish a dental home as young as possible. If that time has passed and your loved one is older, don't fret! More and more dental offices are becoming "special needs" friendly. Be up front about your loved one's individuality as well as all the practice you have completed at home. Don't get discouraged if a couple offices turn you away before finding the right one.
2. Schedule during your loved one's best time of day. Ask the office if they would be willing to offer desensitization visits. This will help tremendously for long term behavioral cooperation. Just like you gradually introduced dental techniques at home, we will need to do that same for the dental office visits.
3. Things that may help include noise-canceling headphones, listening to music, a weighted blanket or vest, sunglasses, turning off fluorescent ceiling lights, limited talking during the dental procedure, or watching a favorite video, using a favorite fidget toy. Giving your loved one a hand mirror to watch may be helpful as well. Panoramic x-rays are fast and don't involve putting large items in a mouth, these may be better tolerated than conventional intraoral dental x-rays, and parent or caregiver can be stay in the room to provide head support during the exposure of the x-ray.
4. Provide visual supports, such as, social stories and first/then statements, such as, "First I count your teeth, then you go home." Social stories and video models can help children with ASD understand the expectations and follow along with the steps. Social stories can be easily found on YouTube and are also a great tool to use when practicing at home.
5. Incorporate positive reinforcement throughout the dental visit, and reward for success after completion of each step, or at the end of the visit. Please for not offer rewards that are high in sugar and carbohydrates.

Overall, it is possible to alleviate the stressors of a dental visit over time. Research shows that practicing at home as well as incorporating desensitization visits at the dental office, prove successful in many families lives when trying to make dental visits more successful.

Created by: Whitney Haley RDH,BASDH

Chase, I., & Baumer, N. (2021, June 29). Making visits to the dentist easier for people with autism spectrum disorder. Harvard Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/making-visits-to-the-dentist-easier-for-people-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-202106292513>

**MEET A SPECIAL DAY
FOUNDATION
DENTAL
PARTICIPANT FROM
NAPLES!**

AVERY

- **Lives at home with** - Mom & Dad
- **School/Education/Job/accomplishme**

nts: 2nd grade



- **How has the Special Day Foundation helped you?** Special Foundation has really been a God send to me and my family. My son has high functioning autism, and we went to 2 different dentists before we found this organization. My son was able to get all his dental work done (at no cost) with providers that understand his needs. The environment catered to children with special needs with a sensory room, exam rooms with low lighting and light music. I have never had a poor experience here and I am grateful that I was able to find somewhere my son feels safe and able to get his dental needs met. I am a huge advocate for this program!!
- **What have you learned from your monthly visits with Ali?** My son has learned dental hygiene and how to properly brush and floss his teeth.
- **Hobbies/Interests?** Loves to dance and draw! Anything SPACE related!
- **Favorite Food?** Pizza and Cookies
- **Favorite Movie?** Super Mario Bros
- **Favorite Music?** Anything on "Just Dance".

UF HEALTH HIALEAH DENTAL CENTER

This fiscal year we started strong and have accomplished so much, thanks to our amazing staff and our residents. The passion and love that they put into seeing my patients is admirable. I couldn't do it without them. We are only six months into the year and it is looking like we are going to double our services for our patients. So far, at UF Dental Clinic in Hialeah, we have had 68 on-site visits and we have provided 264 dental procedures, such as exams, radiographs, prophy, resins, crowns, extractions etc. We have had 124 off-site visits and performed home care oral hygiene instructions and

fluoride treatment applications. I am very pleased with the pace of the treatments we have performed, allowing us to reach more patients and provide further care that is so helpful to our SDF patients.

-Marielys, RDH-

NCEF PEDIATRIC DENTAL CENTER

We continue to use the sensory room two half days, per week, and the patients are offered one-hour appointments instead of the standard 40- minutes, this aids in providing additional time to maximize behavior improvement. In addition, desensitization tools are purchased to help relieve anxiety for the children, anytime it is needed. Also, the handheld X-ray unit has made it easier for us to take their radiographs.

Ali visits the Prescribed Extended Care facility in Naples called Caring Hearts. Fluoride varnish and oral hygiene instructions are provided every 3 months in this facility.

To date, 211 patients are enrolled in the Special Needs Children's Oral Health program, 35 more patients since last report. Since July 2023, we have had 390 patient visits and 283 dental procedures completed. All thanks to the funding of the Special Day Foundation.

We had a training by a national speaker, Joel Shaul, on October 13th, 2023 for the faculty, residents, and staff of the NCEF Pediatric Dental Center at UF. A total of 19 were trained, including Whitney and Marielys, to improve their knowledge in how Autism may affect a child's thinking, social interactions, emotions and sensory experience. Ali is planning to go with Whitney and Marielys to the CARD Annual Conference next month in Orlando, FL.

The Facebook account is very active, and currently has 146 followers. We post how the patients are treated in our Sensory Room and all-important events.

-Ali, RDH -

[Click HERE to visit Naple's Facebook page!](#)

How to Help

How can you help Special Day Foundation?!

The biggest way you can help Special Day Foundation is to help us spread the word! Whether you have a special needs person in your family or know of someone who does. If you know a business who is interested in giving back to the community or you know a boat captain who may enjoy hearing about our fishing trips, please forward them our newsletter.

To the many individuals and businesses who have already supported the Special Day Foundation and continue to do so... *Thank you!* And to those of you who are new to Special Day Foundation... we look forward to hearing from you!

Like and follow us on Facebook



For improved access to SPECIALIZED DENTAL CARE we encourage you to contact **Whitney**, our Community Outreach Dental Hygienist from the University of Florida.

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