

## Rich/Collins Final Report

### Synopsis

Forever Smiles is an organization dedicated to fostering meaningful discussion about oral health disproportionality in disadvantaged populations in the Waltham-greater Boston area. This “one-man show” incorporated a multitude of activities which targeted community engagement and knowledge building for pre-dental students—bridging the gap between alum and students. As the founder of Forever Smiles, I had the opportunity to exercise my leadership skills: effective communication, coordination, and sustainability. This evaluation works to explain the timeline of the project; personal takeaways; and actual expenses of project conduction.

### Implementation

#### Expectation v Reality

All events conducted in the Spring ‘22 semester had at least a 2-week preparation period before commencement. The project intended to dismantle and inform people of issues creating oral health disparities in low-income communities. Initially, the plan was to target three large age groups by implementing workshops most beneficial to alleviating financial burdens in the future. Late January- early February, youth(7-13) would partake in a workshop which educates on good oral hygiene practices and alternative methods of maintaining oral health. Late February through Early March, Adolescents(13-18) are more susceptible to engaging in sexual relations lacking the safe sex knowledge. Ideally, the second install of this three step process would be educating adolescents in safe sex and identifying diseases through oral examination. Late March-early April, Adults(18+) are typically uninformed about financial literacy, so the organization was

working to bring a financial advisor who specializes in dental coverage to educated willing participants for this event.

May '22, a panel was conducted which sat predominantly black dental professionals in discussing lack of oral health representation in government and how that trickles down to societal norms– brainstorming ways to address and rectify the oral health insecurities in the American Health Care system.

As reality would have it, most things which are planned are prone to change. My community partner, YMCA of Greater Boston, Samantha De Melim, and I worked extremely hard to find audiences to satisfy the initial course of action. The YMCA of Greater Boston could only supply the youth from the afterschool program, but no other sponsors were receptive to our mission. It occurred to us that many adults and adolescents are dealing with many external stressors which could make them less willing to engage in a start-up organization preaching such a niche topic. In order to retain the same impact which Forever Smiles set out to do, we devise an alternative plan. In this reality, youth engaged in a two-part workshop series which targeted proper oral hygiene and cavities as a whole. These two-part workshops worked to incorporate how topics of oral health relate to real-world scenarios, which makes the content more applicable as youth are people in development. Both events encourage youth to pursue careers in dentistry, as well.

The first workshop, *Kids & Beyond: The Places A Beautiful Smile Can Take You*, was conducted March '22 at the William Stanley School. Over 40 students were in attendance to

witness Forever Smiles grand event. The format which I followed for all of my workshops is introduction, presentation, activity, then snack debrief.

The second installment of the two-part workshop series , *Kids and Beyond: Are Cavities Contagious?*, was conducted April '22 at the same location. Students who attended the first workshop had the opportunity to choose the next topic of discussion, as Forever Smiles believes to listen and adhere to the needs of the community. Cavities was a highly requested topic by students and staff, so accommodations were made. This workshop held the same gravity in comparison to the first.

The final event, *Critical Conversations on Oral Health Disparities*, went according to the original expectation. Throughout the months of March and April, emails, listings, and requests were posted seeking willing participants to sit on this panel. I required all participants who sat on this panel to be established dental professionals who have extensive knowledge on the accessible gap of resources in low-income communities. The panelists which were selected for this event consisted of the following dental professionals: Dr. Jeannette Pope-Ozimba DDS, Dr. Tracy Petry DDS, and Dr. Angela Breeden DDS. Over 18 participants were present for the virtual event. I assessed the importance of the event based on the span at which the conversation took place. The cut-off time was 45 mins; however, the discussion lasted for more than an hour and 15 minutes. Participants of the event gave only positive feedback!

## Reflection

## Personal Takeaway

Through the whole experience, I realized that curating a project in the span of a Spring semester is not for the faint of heart. I had to learn how to operate on a timely schedule—deadlines had to be made in order to follow-through with the mission Forever Smiles sought to complete. It would be naive to assume everyone listens and understands the gravity of oral health, so comprehensive events which promoted the events were created during the process of hosting the workshops and panels.

The goal of Forever Smiles is to continue to apply for funding through Rich/Collins Fellowship or other outsourcing programs which align with our mission. This experience has made a world of an impact on the health care path which I chose. I found a lot of security in discussing dentistry and educating the youth. Forever Smiles is working to become a non-profit which could provide dental coverage for those who have limited access to dental care through Medicaid. I hope to be able to start my own dental practice which will be able to provide affordable dental care for all people, regardless of race, gender, sex, etc.

### Final Budget

Because students would have to listen to a presentation during the workshop, I thought it was only fair to provide snacks and refreshments. The cost for snacks and refreshments totaled to \$35.62(not including tax and shipping).

For the first workshop, I allowed the students to make their own version of toothpaste with more sustainable products. In order to do this activity, I had to purchase Xylitol, baking soda, coconut oil, peppermint extract, 5 measuring cups, and miniature containers. The following items totaled up to \$87.89(not including tax and shipping). Each student at the end of this workshop left with a toothbrush and toothpaste. The cost of the toothbrushes totaled up to \$35.52.

For the second workshop, I wanted the students to experience something virtually similar to that of a dentist. The activity was to create their own mold of a cavity and how to properly extract that cavity using dental techniques and equipment. I purchased Play-do dentist kits which perfectly worked with the topic of cavities. The five dental kits totaled up to \$164.95, again, not including tax or shipping.

Money also went into hosting the promotional events to promote the workshops and panel. I purchased 5 bamboo toothbrush packs, floss, and toothpaste to encourage staff and students to join the events. The total cost of the promotional events came up to \$120.56.

The total cost of the entire project came up to approximately \$609.49. There is around \$490 in grant funds which has yet to be used. I plan to compensate the dental professional who participated in the panel at least \$100 per person.