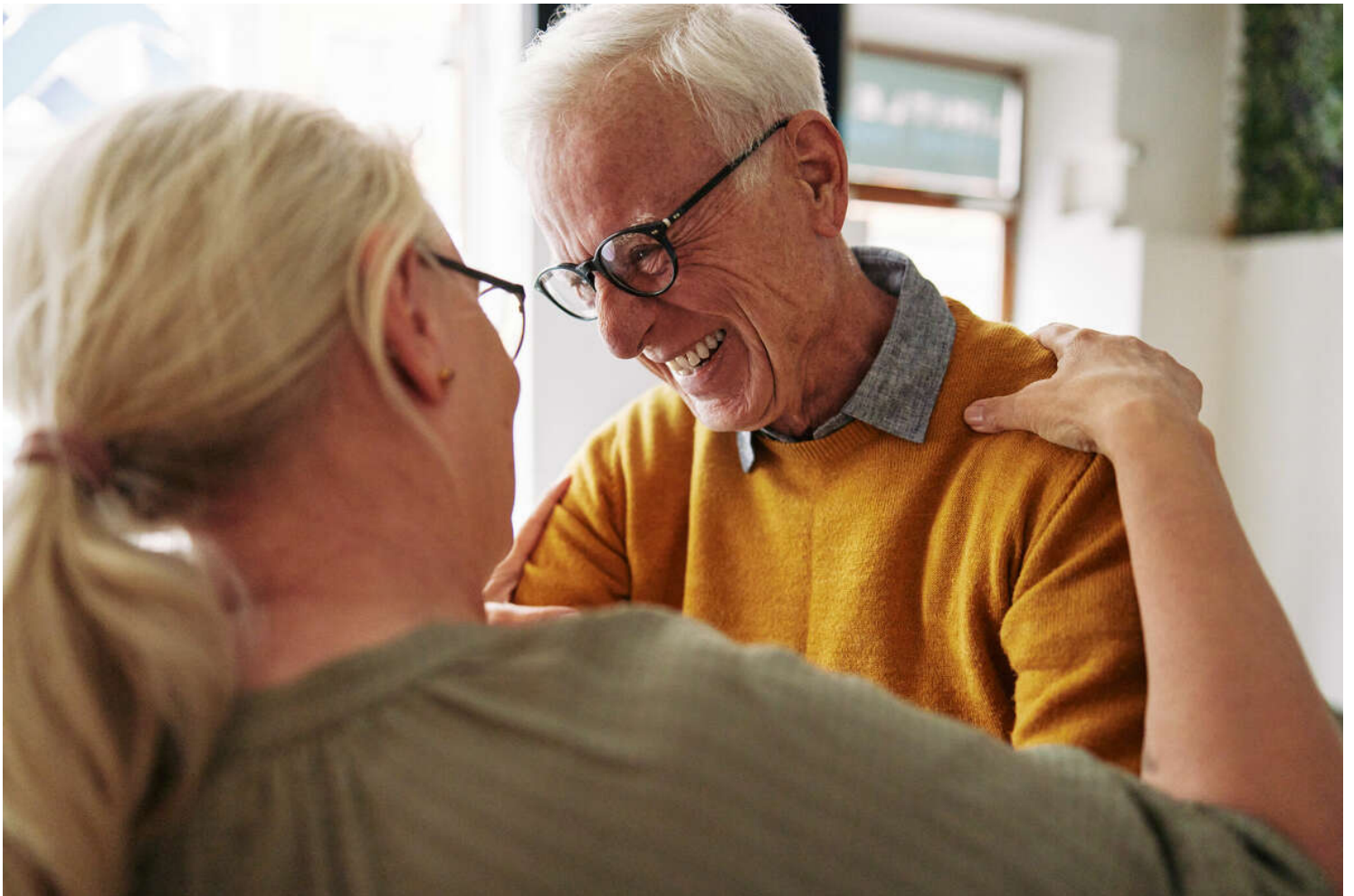
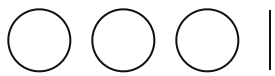


MARKETPLACE

SilverSource supports healthy senior smiles in Connecticut

Delta Dental of Connecticut

Dec. 5, 2022



A healthy, beautiful smile can make anyone look and feel better, and keeping up with best dental hygiene practices is an important part of healthy aging.

Delta Dental of Connecticut

(Ad) A healthy, beautiful smile can make anyone look and feel better, and keeping up with best dental hygiene practices is an important part of healthy aging.

Good dental health not only protects against gum disease, gum inflammation, and tooth loss, but can also protect against many other age-related diseases.¹

Additionally, people over 65 are more susceptible to oral cancer, and studies show a strong correlation between dental health and overall health in this age group.²

Unfortunately the path to continued oral health for seniors isn't always easy, as potential physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments associated with aging may make home oral health care and patient education/communications challenging.³ Additionally, 65 percent of Medicare beneficiaries lack dental coverage.² Thankfully the road to good oral health for seniors in Connecticut is paved not in gold, but in "silver."

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SilverSource in Stamford, Conn., meets the oral health needs of the city's senior communities through their Elder Dental Care Program. Supporting the treatment of low-income seniors, SilverSource provides a safety net for those who have nowhere else to turn for dental care.

Here at Delta Dental of Connecticut, we want to help keep your smiles healthy for a lifetime. This year the Delta Dental Foundation awarded a 2022 SMILE Mini Grant of \$10,000 to SilverSource in support of the Elder Dental Care Program. We recently spoke with Chief Development Officer Marianne Delaney to gain insight on

how the inspiring program supports dental care and overall health for seniors in Connecticut.

What is the purpose and mission of SilverSource?

Delaney: Our purpose is to provide a safety net for seniors in need; to keep a roof over their heads with the heat and lights on, food on the table, and offer the medical/dental care they need. Our mission advances the dignity, independence, and quality of life of older adults by providing supportive services to those in need, guidance to families, engaging in community partnerships, and advocating for sound public policies.

What are some barriers seniors face in receiving timely dental care in the communities you serve?

Delaney: Cost is a significant barrier to receiving dental care for the low-income older adults we serve. By funding dental care for seniors in need, Delta Dental's support of the SilverSource Elderly Dental Care program helps reduce the disparities in access to dental care for struggling seniors.

Most Medicare beneficiaries do not have dental coverage, and many go without care because they cannot afford it. Rates of going without care are even higher among those who are low-income, in poor health, disabled, and/or Black or Hispanic. Unfortunately dental procedures, dental lab fees, and prescription medications are typically not covered by Medicare, and are very expensive.

Assisting low-income seniors with the high costs of dental care preserves their very limited incomes for basic needs such as food, rent, and utilities. They can then avoid the negative outcomes of tooth loss, which have a significant impact on: quality of life; nutrition; the ability to eat solid food; speech, self-esteem; poor health; and higher levels of social isolation. Access to routine dental care also

reduces dental-related emergency department visits by older adults who are unable to afford regular dental care.

Transportation is another barrier older adults face when receiving dental care. The need for transportation to dental and medical appointments is an important priority for seniors, and the lack of it can also present a significant barrier to accessing care. The SilverSource “Ride to Wellness” program provides free rides to all medical/dental appointments for seniors in Stamford — including those using wheelchairs — thus directly addressing and eliminating this barrier for clients.

Overall health is also impacted by a lack of dental care and can lead to delayed diagnosis of serious health conditions and long-term complications such as periodontal disease. Long-term chronic diseases can exacerbate and complicate the health outcomes of those not receiving dental care. For instance, poor blood sugar levels put seniors at higher risk for oral health problems such as inflammation and gum disease — serious long-term conditions that in turn increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Use of some medications, as well as common chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, also increase the risks of tooth loss in older adults.

Given the significant long-term health risks associated with poor oral care and the consequences of untreated dental issues, providing access to dental care for low-income older adults has a significant impact on their short-term and long-term health and quality of life.

How many seniors does the Elder Dental Care Program program serve annually?

Delaney: We serve 30 seniors annually.