



MAHEC Children's Oral Health Programs Get an 'Amazing Gift'

The Leon Levine Foundation doubles its grant to MAHEC for School Smiles program



The School Smiles program requires transporting equipment to school sites for x-rays, cleanings, exams, and treatment to remove and stop cavities—a task that Facilities assists with. Shown in this file photo with the School Smiles van are (from left) Dental Case Manager Beverly Haney, Dr. Katherine Jowers, and Facilities Management Director Ron Fagan

During Children's Dental Health Month, here's an extra special reason to smile: A \$300,000 grant from [The Leon Levine Foundation](#)—double what we applied for—will enable MAHEC to provide care for more under-resourced children through our school-based oral health and operating room dentistry programs.

School Smiles is a mobile program that provides uninsured kindergarten through second graders with preventative and basic dental treatment services in "dental offices" MAHEC sets up in public schools.

Teams of our faculty, residents, dental assistants, and hygienists provide clinical care and education; families don't have to miss work to get their children to the dentist.

Some of the children are in such great need that they're beyond the program's scope of care. Instead, they need rehabilitation under general anesthesia in an operating room, which MAHEC also provides. Unfortunately, even though that care can relieve the children of pain and infection, families sometimes decline the OR opportunity because they cannot risk the medical debt.

When **Katherine Jowers, DDS**, Chair of MAHEC's Department of Dentistry and Oral Health, met in person with a representative from the Levine Foundation, the discussion of the School Smiles program led to a conversation about the issue with OR debt as well. As a result of this in-person interaction, Levine not only granted MAHEC the \$150,000 that was requested to support the School Smiles program, but also awarded an additional—and *unrequested*—\$150,000 to support the expense of the care provided, including the hospital work.

"This grant was an amazing gift for us," said Dr. Jowers. "Because of the population we serve, the revenue we produce in the program is far less than its costs. We were thrilled to get the award and absolutely floored to have the amount doubled. We will be able to help many, many children with this money!"

The programs also benefit our dentistry residents and students, giving them the opportunity to gain skills in treating children and special needs adults and to get experience in pediatric and operating room dentistry.

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