



APPLE TREE DENTAL

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mn DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Date: Dec. 9, 2020

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NEWS RELEASE

Apple Tree Dental and DHS open new dental center

Fergus Falls facility will increase care for underserved patients

Low-income families and people with disabilities will have greater access to dental care in West Central Minnesota thanks to an innovative partnership between Apple Tree Dental and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). A virtual open house for the clinic was held today.

After more than three years in development, the \$5.1 million Center for Dental Health in Fergus Falls opened in early September with a focus on serving children, families, and seniors who cannot afford care and people with disabilities who need specialized facilities and expertise.

“I am excited for the people of Fergus Falls and West Central Minnesota who will benefit greatly from the new Center for Dental Health,” said Governor Tim Walz. “The collaboration between the Department of Human Services and Apple Tree Dental will not only increase the life-changing capacity of both organizations, but also provide a model for future public-nonprofit partnerships that can better serve the people of Minnesota.”

Apple Tree CEO Dr. Michael Helgeson said strong support from community leaders has paved the way for the project. The center is made possible by more than \$2 million in grants from the Frank W. Veden Charitable Trust, the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation, the Otto Bremer Trust, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, PrimeWest Health and many other local and regional businesses and community members. The city of Fergus Falls and Bremer Bank are providing long-term financing.

“Collaborative efforts are key to attracting the funding that is making the new Center for Dental Health possible,” Helgeson said. “The grantors each are making extraordinary contributions, and the partnership with the Department of Human Services means that we’re poised to help thousands of area residents get critically needed health care.”

Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead said the innovative partnership will result in expanded treatment capacity and more cost-effective treatment for patients.

“Apple Tree is a nationally respected pioneer in providing safety-net dental care to low-income and underserved populations and DHS has deep clinical expertise in special care dentistry. Sharing a space will amplify our strengths and will allow both of us to accomplish more for the people we serve.”

Apple Tree owns the new facility and DHS is a long-term tenant. The two formerly operated separate dental clinics in Fergus Falls, both of which lacked the capacity to meet the need in the region. Last year, Apple Tree’s Fergus Falls Center provided more than 9,100 appointments and screenings to more than 3,300 patients. Even so, more than 1,200 people remain on a waiting list. At its Fergus Falls location, DHS serves 650 patients with disabilities who cannot obtain dental care elsewhere and logs 1,900 clinic visits annually.

In the new 11,000-square-foot facility, Apple Tree and DHS will continue to have their own staff, dedicated treatment spaces, and separate entrances. They will share state-of-the-art imaging and lab space, sterilization equipment and other costs. The collaboration will save money, improve quality and make it possible to nearly double access to dental care in West Central Minnesota. The center will also help attract and be a training facility for dental professionals

The impact on the community is significant, according to local public health officials. “I am so pleased for this project. The need for expanding access to care for lower-income people is huge,” said Diane Thorson, former Otter Tail County public health director and current Apple Tree board member. “Partnering with dental education programs will benefit our rural communities that are seeking to recruit providers.”

Delta Dental Foundation of Minnesota provided a grant of \$650,000. “Delta Dental is pleased to see the center come to life,” said Joseph P. Lally, executive director. “The need is there, and the center is a big step toward meeting the needs in the Fergus Falls area. The foundation’s support aligns with the mission to bring oral health care to all Minnesotans statewide.”

Support for project planning and site selection came from the Frank W. Veden Charitable Trust, a local foundation that has supported expanded access to dental care in Otter Tail County for many years. Trustees worked closely with Apple Tree on the project.

“By forming a long-term public-nonprofit partnership, Apple Tree and the Department of Human Services will be able to optimize financial resources and clinical expertise,” said trustee Gary Johnson. “This new center will serve thousands of underserved children, adults and seniors for decades to come.”

The Otto Bremer Trust, a long-time supporter of Apple Tree Dental, provided a grant of \$500,000. “We’re excited to support this unique partnership between Apple Tree and the Minnesota Department of Human Services,” said Daniel C. Reardon, co-CEO and trustee. “This is a great example of two organizations working together to create a long-term asset for the benefit of the community.”

Local dentists and community members, the City of Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County and other organizations such as the West Central Initiative Fund, the L.A. Amundson Ohana Foundation, Patterson Dental, Primus Dental, A-dec (a dental equipment company), Bremer Bank of Fergus Falls and Park Region/Otter Tail Telcom have also shown strong support for the project.

Photos and Video B-Roll Available for Media

Download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yo52b22x6sekwxr/AAD4aTtzhAp4MtskMpi8Z50Xa?dl=0>

About Apple Tree Dental

Founded in 1985, Apple Tree Dental's mission is to overcome barriers to oral health, for people of all ages, ethnicities and abilities. Apple Tree provides comprehensive preventative care and dental treatment services at eight Centers for Dental Health throughout Minnesota to individuals and families and operates on-site care programs at 145 community partner locations for vulnerable communities using the industry's latest technologies. With special expertise in pediatric, geriatric and special needs populations, Apple Tree is nationally recognized for its pioneering approach to integrating dental care as part of overall health and well-being. For more information, visit appletreedental.org.

About DHS Dental Clinics

The Minnesota Department of Human Services operates five special care dental clinics in key regions of the state for patients with disabilities whose conditions make it difficult for them to obtain dental care from other providers. Patients include people with intellectual disabilities, severe and persistent mental illnesses and traumatic brain injuries.

About the Frank W. Veden Charitable Trust

The Frank W. Veden Charitable Trust was created and named in honor of prominent Fergus Falls dentist Dr. Frank Veden, who lived and practiced in the community his entire life. Upon his death, Dr. Veden left funds to establish a private charitable trust, which has supported important civic and community needs in Fergus Falls and the West Central Minnesota region for many years.

About Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation

The Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation is founded on the belief that everyone deserves a healthy smile. In 2009, Delta Dental of Minnesota's parent organization sold a company and used 100% of the proceeds to establish and fund the foundation. The foundation's mission is to improve the well-being of Minnesotans through oral health. To date, the foundation has invested more than \$35 million to expand prevention and care, reaching more than 1 million people to promote healthy smiles statewide.

About the Otto Bremer Trust

The Otto Bremer Trust (OBT) is a bank holding company and a private charitable trust based in Saint Paul that works at the intersection of finance and philanthropy. The OBT is the 92% owner of Bremer Bank, a regional financial services company, and also manages a diversified investment portfolio. Since its founding, the OBT has invested more than \$700 million in people, places and opportunities in the Upper Midwest. Visit www.ottobremer.org.