

Bright Futures in Healthcare

Clark's Allied Health programs honored this year's graduates with two noteworthy ceremonies, celebrating the achievements of our nursing and dental hygienist programs.

Children's Dental Health Clinic

Clark College to offer free dental health care for children in our community between the ages of 4 to 17 at annual event.

Dental Hygiene

24 seniors of Clark College's Dental Hygiene program presented their community oral health group projects.

Dental clinic re-opens



Pat Niesz, 73, has been coming to Clark College's dental clinic for three years. On this visit, student Stefanie Hatley took x-rays and cleaned Niesz's teeth. Hatley would have graduated Spring quarter. Now she will graduate at the end of August. *Photo: Clark College/Susan Parrish*

For 51 years, Clark College's dental hygiene clinic provided affordable dental service to the community—until the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to close in spring term. Now, thanks to careful planning by the college's dental hygiene program, the Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Services is back open to serve the community and train the next generation of dental caregivers.

The clinic is a win-win for both the community and the students.

"It's a two-way street," says Program Director Kristi Taylor. "We're helping the community, but they're helping the students gain real-world experience. We've set up our clinic so

students have the feel of a private practice. Our goal when students leave here is to be prepared to walk into a private practice. They are very job-ready.”

COVID-19 safety measures added

Before the clinic could reopen, Taylor and instructors scrambled to adapt the lab classes and clinic to meet safety guidelines prescribed by the Centers for Disease Control, Washington State Department of Health, and American Dental Association to protect students, staff and patients.

“It’s a lot of changes across the dental and medical fields,” says Taylor.

The program was helped by the fact that many safety procedures were already in place. Even before the pandemic, students and instructors wore face masks in the clinic when working directly with patients. Frequent handwashing and wearing gloves were also standard.

“We have always been very conscious of infection control,” Taylor says.

Since COVID-19, the program has implemented these new safety measures:

- Scrub caps now are mandatory.
- Clear plastic face shields are worn by students or instructors who are within six feet of a patient.
- Two-foot-tall clear plastic partitions were installed to separate individual stations (called “operatories”) from each other and from common spaces.
- Following social distancing guidelines, the clinic has reduced the number of patients and students on site. The clinic has 30 operatories. Normally, 25 students are working at a time, and they treat 22 patients. Due to COVID restrictions, the students and patients are

divided into two groups, and only 10 to 15 patients are scheduled at a time.

- N-95 masks will be required when the clinic is using aerosols again. For now, the program has opted out of using aerosols in the clinic because they potentially could spread COVID-19 particles through the air. Normally, student hygienists use aerosols to polish teeth and to cut out decay before filling cavities. During the pandemic, if a patient needs a filling, the clinic refers them to an outside dental office.

“These precautions are probably long overdue,” Taylor says. “I think we’ll see many of these safety measures remain [after COVID-19].”

Students were assigned patients to call and explain the safety protocols put in place. Some patients chose not to come into the clinic during the pandemic.



Dr. Eugene Sakai works with student Shaylin Breen in Clark College's dental clinic. *Photo: Clark College/Susan Parrish.*

A dentist oversees every clinic session. On this day Dr. Eugene Sakai, retired from his own dental practice, is on site to examine patients and diagnose issues, do soft-tissue exams, and look for disease.

Dr. Sakai says, "COVID is changing things a lot."

CDC guidelines recommend that people maintain six feet distance from others.

"We cannot do our work from six feet away," Taylor says. "A lot of active hygienists have decided to retire due to COVID."

As a result, Taylor says, the industry is short of hygienists. This is good news for Clark's student hygienists.

Taking care of students

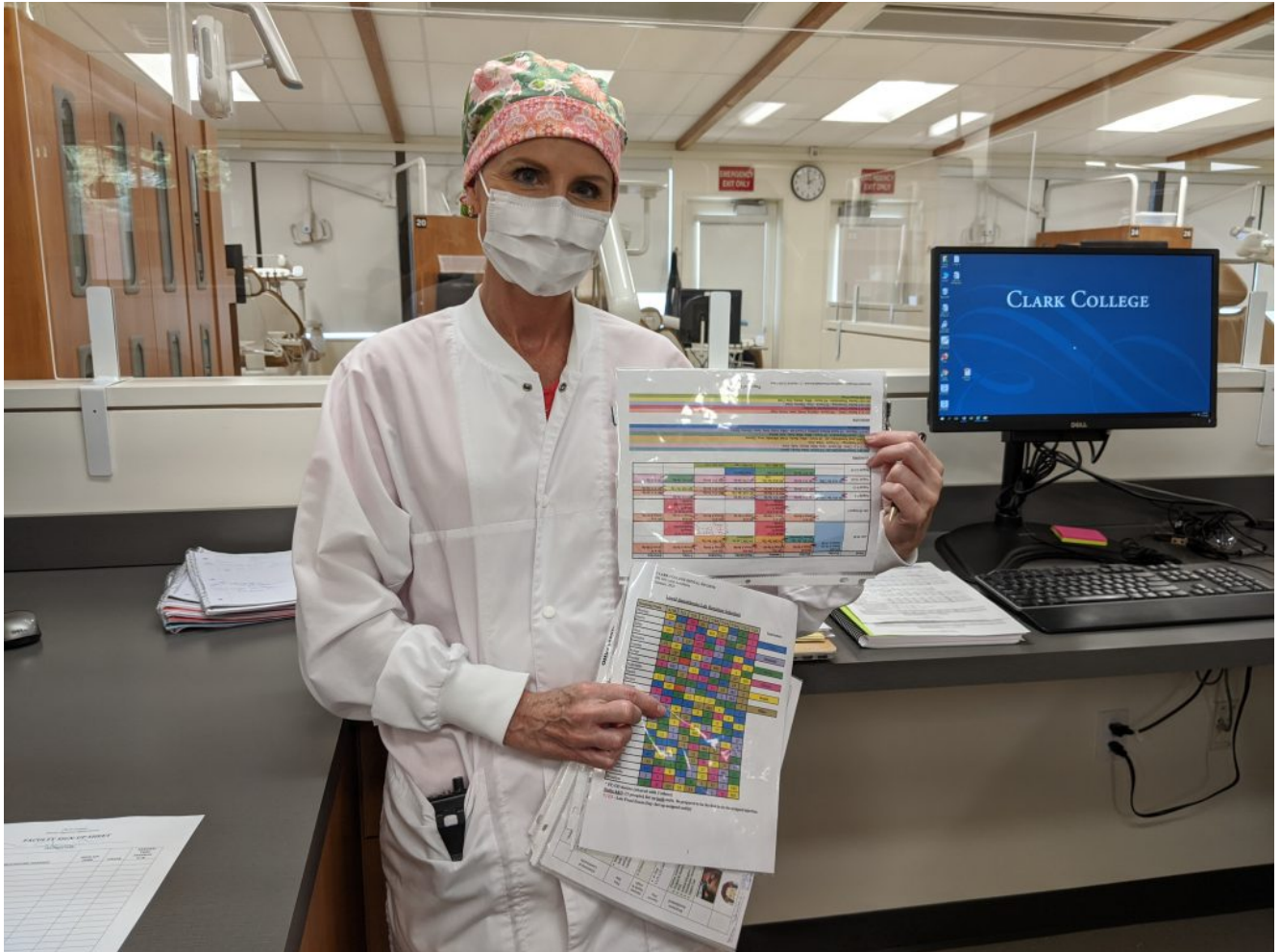
Public health restrictions meant instructors and students worked remotely Spring quarter. Before COVID-19, students had all face-to-face classes, except for one online class per quarter. It took team effort to adapt Spring classes for remote learning. By moving the didactic portion into spring and the labs/clinics into summer, instructors didn't have to create many instruction videos.

Dental hygiene students who were scheduled to graduate Spring term had missed an entire quarter of crucial hands-on instruction, both in the lab and working with patients in the clinic. Taylor and her team got to work figuring out how to schedule clinical hours for all students while also observing the social distancing protocols that reduced the number of students allowed to work simultaneously and the number of patients allowed in the clinic.

By the time dental hygiene students returned to campus on June 21, all the lead instructors had put together a plan for their

respective clinics.

“We all worked together to create the overall schedule of courses that included all the labs and clinics they had missed in the spring,” Taylor says.



Dental hygiene instructor Amy Johnson holds the color-coded schedule her department created to ensure all students got the required lab time to graduate.

Then all the plans were compiled onto a detailed, color-coded schedule to ensure all students completed their required hours for labs including local anesthesia, nitrous oxide, radiology, cleaning and clinic. Implementing social distancing while compressing all the labs and clinical experience into the shorter summer schedule has required most students and faculty to work six-day weeks, and to sometimes work Sunday too.

“This summer has been full of catching all the students up on their hands-on skills,” Taylor says.

“It’s been really hard on the students,” adds instructor Amy Johnson.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in dental hygiene is a four-year degree. The dental portion takes two years to complete. Each year about 100 potential students from as far away as Seattle and California apply for the program’s 25 slots.

“Students can come to Clark, pay a much lower tuition [than at a four-year university], and get the same training,” Taylor says.

Seniors will graduate at the end of August after completing their hands-on clinics.

Taylor says some students already have jobs waiting as soon as they pass their six clinical boards and get their license to practice.

“In recent years, all of our students have found jobs,” Taylor says. “I get four to six phone calls a week from dental offices looking for hygienists. I’m extremely happy we could return to the lab.”

Clark’s dental hygiene clinic is open to the public and offers affordable dental care to adults and children. To schedule an appointment, call 360-992-2158. Learn more at www.clark.edu/dentalhygiene.

All smiles



Every member of Clark College's 2019 dental hygiene graduating class passed all six of their board exams. *Photo courtesy of Kristi Taylor.*

Clark College's dental hygiene program has long had plenty to smile about: its high-quality teaching facilities, its status as the college's first bachelor's degree program, and its important work providing dental hygiene care in the community.

Recently, the program's faculty received news to make their smiles even brighter: Every student in their 2019 graduating class passed all six of their board exams.

The exams are extremely rigorous, and a 100 percent pass rate is remarkable. The exams include:

- The National Board Exam (an 8-hour written exam)
- The Restorative Exam (placement and finishing of amalgam [silver] and composite [white]) fillings
- The Anesthesia Written Exam
- The Anesthesia Clinical Exam (accurately administer the 2 most difficult injections on a patient)

- Hygiene Clinical Exam (thoroughly remove tenacious calculus [tartar] from a patient's teeth with severe periodontitis [gum disease])
- The Ethical Board exam

"These are six different high-stakes exams that test the students' knowledge and skills," wrote Dean of Business and Health Sciences Brenda Walstead in an email to the college community. "Thank you to an extremely dedicated and talented group of faculty and staff for working endless hours to prepare the students to pass each of these exams, obtain their licenses, and go to work."

Free dental health day for kids



Smiles abounded at the 2017 Children's Free Dental Health Day. This year's clinic will be held on February 3, 2018.

The Clark College Dental Hygiene Program will hold a free children's dental clinic on Saturday, February 3, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the main campus of Clark College. The event will take place in the Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center in the Health Sciences Building on Clark's main campus.

Dental hygiene students from Clark College will provide care under the direct supervision of licensed dental hygienist and dentists. Services will include cleanings, sealants, x-rays, sealants, doctor's exams, fluoride, and select emergency treatments for children ages 18 and under. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Dental Hygiene Business Office at (360) 992-2158.

This is the eleventh year that Clark's Dental Hygiene has offered a free children's dental health day. In addition to this event, the college's Dental Hygiene students provide low-

cost dental hygiene care to the community as part of their clinic practice.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA 98663. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. If you need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event, contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013 as soon as possible.

Photo: Clark College/Nick Bremer

Little patients, big smiles



More than 100 children received care at the 2017 Children's Free Dental Health Day.

Some days, it's like the Tooth Fairy is trying to tell you something.

For instance, there's nothing like losing one of your baby teeth to remind you that you need to visit the dentist. Fortunately for Juliet Shiemke, age 7, students from the Clark College Dental Hygiene program had organized a Free Children's Dental Health Day just when she needed it most. Within hours of having another one of her front teeth pop out on Saturday, February 4, she was sitting in a dentist chair in the college's Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center making sure the rest of her teeth were clean and healthy.

"My wife saw a flier for this at Juliet's school, and it really came at the right time," said Juliet's father, Marc Shiemke, as he watched a Clark College Dental Hygiene student clean her teeth. "We moved up from Arizona six months ago and haven't gotten dental insurance yet."

Shiemke's wife, Dallas, was sitting in a nearby bay with their 3-year-old son, Brendan. Like his sister, Brendan left the dentist chair with a clean bill of health and a bag full of goodies.

"Dental hygiene is very important for our kids," Shiemke said. "I know I didn't have the greatest care when I was growing up and I kind of suffered for it in my adult life—needing some bridges and teeth pulled. I want to make sure my kids get the best care for their teeth so they don't have to go through the same stuff that I've gone through."

That's the idea behind this annual event, said Dr. Peter Lubisich, a pediatric dentist who serves on the college's Dental Hygiene Advisory Council and organizes the volunteer dentists who help make this day possible. "In a sense, we're a safety net for those who fall through the cracks" of the state's dental-insurance coverage, he said. "One of the main reasons kids miss school can be because of tooth decay."



Casey Hedeem takes notes on a patient at the Children's Free Dental Health Day.

While Children's Dental Health Day, now in its 11th year, is the largest free-care event held by the Dental Hygiene program, its students regularly contribute free or low-cost care in their community. Indeed, the two students who led this year's event originally became inspired to take on the mammoth

responsibility after participating last spring in a free dental day for adults through a local nonprofit.

“The first patient we had there, we had tears in our eyes from the reaction that she had,” recalled Casey Hedeon, who expects to receive her Bachelor of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene this spring. “With the free clinic, she got what’s called a ‘partial’ so that she didn’t have a missing front tooth. She was in tears. At that moment, we knew this is what we wanted to do: We wanted to be part of something bringing that kind of change to people’s lives.”

Hedeon and her classmate Stephanie Pfeifer have been working on the event since September. With the help of many other student volunteers, they have publicized the event, organized appointments, and worked out the logistics of getting almost 130 children and their families in and out of the clinic smoothly.

“Even though we do it every year, we really want the students to plan their own event,” said Prof. Kristi Taylor, Interim Program Director of the Dental Hygiene program. “This gives them first-hand knowledge, not only to plan a public event and to actually see what it’s like and what that takes, but also to be one of the clinicians providing that care for the people who are coming here.”

As far as Marc Shiemke and his family are concerned, the students did a great job. “From the moment we walked in the door, the staff’s been super-friendly and super-efficient,” he said. “I thought it would take a long time, but we’ve probably been here half an hour and we’re almost done.”

Indeed, just minutes later, Juliet was sitting up in her chair. The Clark student who had been cleaning her teeth smiled and congratulated her on being a great patient, then held up her hand. And Juliet, flashing the brightest of gap-toothed smiles, returned the student’s high-five and got ready

to go home with her family.

Photos and video: Clark College/Nick Bremer

Free Children's Dental Health Day on Feb. 4



The Clark College Dental Hygiene Program will hold a free children's dental clinic on Saturday, February 4, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the main campus of Clark College. The event will take place in the Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center in the Health Sciences Building on Clark's main campus.

Dental hygiene students from Clark College will provide care under the direct supervision of licensed dental hygienist and dentists. Services will include cleanings, sealants, x-rays, sealants, doctor's exams, fluoride, and select emergency treatments for children ages 18 and under. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Dental Hygiene Business Office at (360) 992-2158.

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Penguins Fly



Graduates from Clark College's welding program wait to enter the Sunlight Supply Amphitheater before the college's 2016 commencement ceremony.

"Mommy did it!" read the message on Ashley Ellis's mortarboard cap, the glittery writing sparkling in the sun as she waited outside the Sunlight Supply Amphitheater before Clark College's 80th Commencement ceremony on June 16.



Ashley Ellis

Ellis wrote the message for her 2-year-old son, Paul, who would be in the stands watching his mother receive her Associate in Applied Technology degree in pharmacy technician—making her the first generation of her family to earn a college degree.

“I just wanted to show my family that I could do more,” Ellis explained. “I dropped out of high school at 16, and now here I am graduating with honors.”

As was the case for many of the approximately 720 Clark graduates waiting to process, Ellis’s achievement did not come without sacrifice. “I didn’t sleep a lot,” she said with a laugh. “I got up at 3:30 a.m. to study sometimes.”

While many graduates, like Ellis, came to Clark after time away from school, others had attended Clark before they’d even graduated from high school. This year’s graduating class included 346 members of Running Start, the Washington State program that allows high school students to attend college tuition-free. This was a record number of Running Start graduates for the college; 170 of them graduated with honors.

“I really felt like the experience I had at Clark prepared me so much—not just for college, but for life,” said Running

Start graduate Anita Bejan; the three fellow Running Start graduates standing with her nodded in agreement.



Bachelor of Applied Science
in Dental Hygiene graduates

Another large group of graduates stood together, chatting and playing with the oversized paper teeth necklaces hung around their necks. These women were some of the 23 graduates from the college's new Bachelor of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene program. This is the first cohort of students to earn their BAS since the program launched in fall 2014, making it the college's first baccalaureate degree. The college is in the process of getting a second BAS program, in Applied Management, accredited and able to enroll students in the 2017 winter quarter.



Bruce Becker

Graduate Bruce Becker, who was waiting to receive his Associate of Arts in Business Administration, said he hoped to enroll in the new BAS. Becker came to Clark after a traffic accident left him unable to do his old job. "It had been 47 years for me since I'd last been in school, so it was a little challenging at first," Becker said. "But it's been really fun. I've had a blast."

Jessica Sanchez was also ready for more school. Sanchez was one of about 20 Transitional Studies graduates waiting to receive their High School Diploma or GED recognition. This is the second year that Transitional Studies graduates have been recognized at Commencement.

For Sanchez, this moment had been four years in the making—two spent learning English through Clark's English as a Second Language program, followed by two of basic education. "I already had a high school diploma," said the 26-year-old native of Mexico, who plans to continue in Clark's for-credit classes. "And then I had to do it all over again, but in another language. I really liked doing it at Clark College, because you can get one-on-one tutoring and there's great support."



Jessica Sanchez, *third from left*, stands with some of her fellow 2016 Transitional

Studies graduates.

Another high school diploma recipient, Esmeralda “Vita” Blanco, addressed the audience inside the amphitheater as one of two student speakers included in the ceremony. Blanco, a single mother of two who dropped out of high school after becoming pregnant, spoke movingly about the ways pursuing her education has changed her and her family’s life. “I strongly believe I’m taking away more than a diploma,” she said. “What I’m really getting is a world of new opportunities, one I can share with the two most important people in my life: my daughters.”

Associate of Arts degree recipient Megan Cook, who attended Clark through Running Start, spoke about the wide range of students she’s encountered at the college. “There are graduates here who are the first in their family to go to college, and those who are learning right alongside their parents,” she said. “I’ve met people of all ethnicities, ages, and genders, and that isn’t necessarily something you find at every college or university.”



Left to right: Washington All-Academic Team member Tammy Senior, ASCC president Sarah Swift, student speaker Megan Cook, Washington All-Academic Team member Qi Wu, Clark College President Bob

Knight, keynote speaker Jessica Lynch, and student speaker Vita Blanco smile with Oswald before going onstage for the 2016 Commencement ceremony.

This year's keynote speaker was former prisoner of war Jessica Lynch. "Each one of us has some type of obstacle, some type of struggle that wants to hold us down," she said. "Do not let it."

The ceremony was occasion for Clark College President Robert K. Knight to announce the names of the recipients of the 2016 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2016 awardees are history instructor Joseph Cavalli; business technology instructor Dr. Kathleen Chatfield; geography professor Heather McAfee; and French professor Doug Mrazek, who is retiring after 38 years at the college.

President Knight also announced the recipient of the 2016-2017 Community College Presidents' Scholarship in Honor of Val Ogden, which is given to a Clark College graduate who demonstrates leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition at Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV) and is renewable for one additional year, essentially providing full tuition to complete a bachelor's degree. This year's recipient was Holly Varner. Two other nominees, Abigail Bambilla and Adeena Rose Wade, received \$1,000 each.

President Knight concluded the evening by saying, "We are excited to think of the ways in which you will change the world. And we are glad to know that Clark College will always hold a special place in your hearts. Remember: Once a member of the Penguin Nation, always a member of the Penguin Nation!"

Approximately 2,000 degrees and certificates were conferred in total on the Class of 2016.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

See more photos from Commencement in our Flickr album.

See full video coverage of the ceremony online from CVTV.

Keeping Kids Healthy



Dental Hygiene students work in the new Firstenberg Family Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center.

The Clark College Dental Hygiene Program will hold a free children's dental clinic on Saturday, February 7 from 8 a.m.

to 2 p.m. on the main campus of Clark College. The event will take place in the newly remodeled Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center in the Health Sciences Building.

Dental hygiene students from Clark College will provide care under the direct supervision of licensed dental hygienist and dentists. Services will include cleanings, sealants, x-rays, and fluoride for children ages 18 and under. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Dental Hygiene Business Office at 360-992-2158.



This has been an exciting time for the Dental Hygiene program. Its recently approved Bachelor of Applied Science degree—the college's first-ever baccalaureate degree—will begin taking students in fall 2015. The program also recently opened the Firstenburg Family Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center. The \$3.3 million facility renovation was funded by donations from a variety of entities including the Firstenburg Foundation, Roy and Virginia Andersen Endowment, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, John A. and Helen M. Cartales Foundation. Renovations of the space allow the program to serve more students and more patients—particularly children and underserved populations.

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