

Labs Describe What it's Like to **Volunteer for Donated Dental Services**

Laboratories volunteer for Dental Lifeline Network's (DLN) Donated Dental Services (DDS) program because they believe DDS patients really deserve their help, according to a recent study conducted for DLN by Talmey-Drake Research & Strategy, an independent research organization. DDS is also efficient and well-run, offering labs the best opportunity to donate, the study revealed.

"The overwhelming generosity of volunteer labs has greatly contributed to more than \$300 million in dental treatment to 100,000 DDS patients in desperate need," said Fred Leviton, DLN president.

DDS is a national program founded by DLN in 1985 that serves people with disabilities or those who are elderly or medically fragile and have no other access to dental treatment. More than 3,800 laboratories and 15,000 dentists volunteer for DDS. NADL is a strategic partner of DLN, a charitable affiliate of the American Dental Association.

"Tens of thousands of people with special needs suffer from severe dental disease with no access to care," said NADL President Harold Burdette, CDT, whose lab has donated fabrications for DDS patients since 1999. "NADL encourages all labs to step forward to volunteer so that DDS can do more to meet the need."

DLN's recent study results were first presented to a joint session of the NADL and NBC boards at their April board meetings. Talmey-Drake conducted 15 in-depth telephone interviews in March with owners and managers of labs who volunteer for DDS. The respondents, located throughout the country, were chosen by the researchers from a list of donating labs provided by DLN. The labs' responses remained anonymous and DLN was not informed which labs were actually interviewed.

From the Study

- The primary reason labs donate their services is their moral compass: they believe it is their responsibility to help and it is the right thing to do. Labs really want to help people who need it. They say they have a desire to give back to the community.
- Labs are willing to work with DDS because the process is efficient, coordinators are considerate and respectful and DDS effectively screens deserving cases.
- Labs say the greatest benefit of volunteering is gratitude and appreciation from the people they've helped. When labs refer to personal visits and handwritten notes from patients, they are proud and moved to have been of service.
- Labs do not seem burdened by the work they do for DDS. Although they graciously accept as many DDS cases as they can handle, they want to "work in" donated cases when it best suits their schedules.
- Labs want to support their dental clients and build existing relationships. Occasionally, a lab may acquire a new client.
- Labs generally prefer working on cases for their dentist clients. Many are willing to take non-



More than Dentistry. Life.

Volunteer

To learn more, call (888) 471-6334 or visit <http://dentallifeline.org/our-volunteers/volunteer-now/>.

client cases occasionally because they believe DDS needs their help. They do not react favorably when non-client dentists request their help only for free work through DDS but never use them for the dental practice's paying clients.

- Small, large and medium labs, regardless of where they are located, have similar perceptions and experiences with DDS.

One challenge that was revealed to DDS in the study is that some labs believe that volunteer dentists receive more recognition than volunteer labs.

“We are focusing on increased visibility for our volunteer labs among state and local dentists to give these generous businesses the recognition they deserve,” Leviton noted.

To learn more about volunteering, please call (888) 471-6334 or visit <http://dentallifeline.org/our-volunteers/volunteer-now/>.

Case 1

Susan, age 62, worked as a North Carolina school custodian until she encountered life-challenging medical issues which also caused her to lose her home. Susan's teeth were crumbling and breaking. A DDS volunteer oral surgeon extracted Susan's remaining teeth and she received new dentures, thanks to DDS volunteer Dr. Larry Holt, a prosthodontist, at Drake Precision Dental Lab.

Case 2

Tom's dental care was a medical priority. Age 51, the Maine resident had seven heart stents, diabetes and his leukemia was in remission. Aggressive arsenic treatment for his leukemia resulted in devastating deterioration of Tom's teeth. Unable to work and relying on Social Security Disability payments and help from a local food pantry, he was referred to DDS. Dr. Robert Berube, a volunteer oral surgeon, discovered an infection that might have proved fatal without treatment. Volunteer Andy Friedman fitted Tom with a full upper denture and volunteer Robert Day of Oak Hill Dental Lab donated the denture fabrication.

Case 1



Above: Dental Lifeline case 1 — Susan & Dr. Larry R. Holt

Case 2



Above: Tom (second from right) and his dental team: (l. to r.) Dr. Andy Friedman, Dr. Robert Berube, Maine DDS Coordinator Ann Caron and Robert Day