

From bottom left to top right: Dr. Jason Grinter gives an exam; Dr. David Trost, Rhonda Trost, Liz Steere, and Lisa Bilbrey; SIU students provide oral health education

## Volunteers provide free dental exams at the Illinois State Fair

With the Illinois State Fair back this year, the Division of Oral Health (DOH) resumed its annual Oral Health Event with dental exams for children at the fair. This event aims to promote oral health and help Illinois families access the required school dental exams for their children. Currently, the Illinois State Board of Education requires proof of an oral health exam for children entering kindergarten, second, sixth, and ninth grades.

From August 17-19, DOH staff were joined by Dr. Katie Kosten, Dr. Jason Grinter, Dr. Mary Ann Rackauskas, Dr. David Trost, and a team of eight senior dental students from Southern Illinois University-School of Dental Medicine to provide free dental examinations and health education. These volunteers were able to provide 41 exams for children, as well as oral health education for their families and other fair goers.

The Division of Oral Health would like to extend a warm thank-you to all the volunteers who made this outreach possible, as well as the families who took a break from carnival rides and funnel cakes to care for their children's oral health. We hope to see you again next year!

If you are interested in volunteering with the Division of Oral Health at the 2022 Illinois State Fair, August 11-21 in Springfield, reach out to us at [DPH.OralHealth@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.OralHealth@illinois.gov).

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## Dr. Stacey Van Scoyoc rises to the challenge of COVID-19

At midnight on March 15, 2020, Dr. Stacey Van Scoyoc felt sick to her stomach. As the vice president of the Illinois State Dental Society (ISDS), she had just gotten off a conference call where key dentists and public health leaders had made an impossible decision: Illinois dentists should close their practices to all but emergency cases. “I felt like I wanted to throw up, knowing what we were asking of the profession and what consequences it would have on the people of the state of Illinois,” she said.

Over the next 10 weeks, Dr. Van Scoyoc felt those consequences acutely. She made the difficult decision to furlough all but two of the staff at [Bloomington Family Dental](#), the practice she founded with her husband. “We’ve been working together so long, they feel like a family,” she told [Tradeoffs podcast](#) in a June 2021 interview. “I wasn’t able to continue to support them, so that hurt.”

While she worried about finances and her three teenagers’ transition to remote learning, Dr. Van Scoyoc continued to serve her community. She collaborated with local dentists, hospitals, and local health department officials to divert oral health emergencies away from hospitals and into local dental offices. When her practice reopened, she rehired her staff, brought in extra hygienists, and extended her hours to compensate for the flood of overdue patients, who often had more complex needs when they returned. “Many more people have been grinding or clenching,” she said. “Typically, in a month, I might see a patient that came in with a fractured tooth. Now it’s at least once a week.”

In January 2021, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation created an emergency rule allowing dentists to be trained to administer COVID-19 vaccines. Dr. Van Scoyoc, along with almost 1,000 Illinois dentists, jumped at the opportunity. She completed the

ISDS Just-in-Time online vaccination training as well as onsite training with the McLean County Medical Reserves. By March, Dr. Van Scoyoc was volunteering at mass vaccination sites.

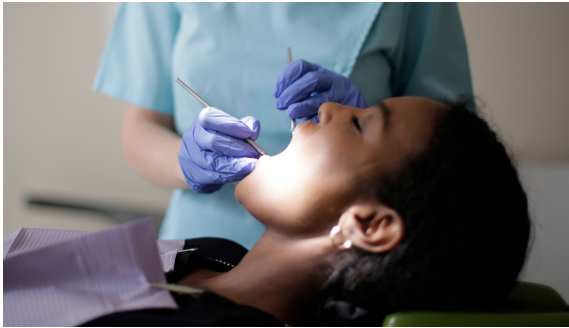
“Whenever I’m giving a vaccine, I just feel like I’m helping save a life, whether it’s that person’s

life or some other person that they may have some contact with,” she said.

Now the president of ISDS, Dr. Van Scoyoc continues to “ride the wave” of COVID-19, as she puts it. She aims to continue offering dentists guidance, vaccination training, and key resources, such as personal protective equipment and COVID-19 toolkits. She also hopes to highlight the continued effectiveness of dental safety protocols, which have kept the prevalence rate of COVID-19 among dentists at 2.6%, according to research published in the [Journal of the American Dental Association](#).

Despite the challenge of the pandemic, Dr. Van Scoyoc remains optimistic about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the field of dentistry. She imagines that teledentistry will become a popular option and that dentists may be able to give routine vaccination in their offices in the future. She credits the pandemic with “reinvigorating” her professional drive and helping her think outside the box. “When you can’t do what you were trained to do, it brings a little bit of excitement back into your career when you are able to get back into it again,” she said.





## New maternal oral health practices data

The Illinois Department of Public Health's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) has released 2017-2019 data, which contains important information about maternal oral health trends. The report found that about 60% of women had had their teeth cleaned in the 12 months before pregnancy, and less than 50% had their teeth cleaned during pregnancy. The report also noted dental cleaning rates for Black and Hispanic women, those with lower education levels, and those with Medicaid for insurance were significantly lower compared to women of other races, education levels, and insurance statuses.

Pregnant women may be more at risk for developing conditions such as gingivitis, which may lead to more serious oral health diseases. Routine dental cleanings, X-rays, and fillings are safe during pregnancy, can detect problems early, and prevent disease. So, encourage women before, during, and after pregnancy to get dental care. For more information on oral health care during pregnancy, check out DOH's [Dental Health During Pregnancy](#) webpage.

## Dr. Jason Grinter advocates for accessibility, education

This May, Dr. Jason Grinter was named the new dental director for [Delta Dental of Illinois](#), adding to a long resume of advocacy and leadership in dentistry. Dr. Grinter is passionate about working with underserved populations, especially patients with special needs and those with Medicaid for insurance. He credits his residency at Illinois Masonic for exposing him to the needs of the community. "That really changed my whole career trajectory," he said.



Based in Rockford, Dr. Grinter's current practice includes [OnSite Dental](#), which provides services out in the community, and [Park City Dental](#), which serves as a dental home for the students and families he meets through OnSite. Dr. Grinter estimates that 98% of his patients have Medicaid for insurance. He also provides hospital dental care through Mercy Health.

Throughout his career, Dr. Grinter has been a strong advocate for accessibility, and he sees school programs as key to increasing access to dental care. "Parents being able to take time off of work is a barrier that no longer exists in the school setting, and there's no financial barrier," he said. "Reducing barriers however you can is the secret."

He also emphasizes the need for education, especially about the seriousness of childhood tooth decay. "We have to give parents the tools to understand and the resources to say, 'This is a problem,'" he said. "This isn't just some inconsequential childhood issue. Those decayed baby teeth will spread to the adult teeth, and this will be a lifelong problem. And it doesn't have to be. It can be 100% preventable."

In his new role at Delta Dental of Illinois, Dr. Grinter hopes to reduce administrative burdens for dentists, to increase training opportunities for treating special needs patients, and to fund community projects through the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation. "I've really been fascinated with how just a little bit of initial funding can spark something in the community. And that's really exciting," he said. "I hope that as time goes on, and those projects take off, that I can be a part of that."

## Updates to the Division of Oral Health website

The Division of Oral Health has updated its website. Here you will find important forms like the recently revised Proof of School Dental Exam forms, relevant publications, and resource links. Have you ever wondered what the Division of Oral Health is and what does it do or how can it be a resource to you?

Each of DOH's programs are highlighted in the following tabs:

- [Craniofacial Anomaly Program](#)
- [Community Water Fluoridation](#)
- [Oral Health Workforce](#)
- [Oral Health Needs Assessment Program](#)
- [School-based Oral Health](#)
- [Maternal and Child Oral Health Programs](#)

Surveillance, policy development, oral health infrastructure, technical assistance, education/awareness and access to oral health care are strong components of the division's programs.

In addition to the changes on DOH's home page, four sections have been added:

- [Oral Health Plans](#)
- [Fast Facts on Oral Health](#)
- [Where/How to Access Oral Health Care](#)
- [Oral Health Data](#)

There is a wealth of information on these pages. Visit today at <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/oral-health>.

## Let's talk!

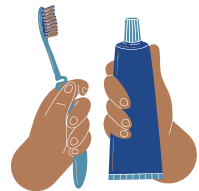


Hello! My name is Liz Steere, and I'm the new Graduate Public Service Intern at DOH. I'm also the new editor of this newsletter.

My hope is that the DOH newsletter can both inform and begin a dialogue. I'd love to hear your feedback! I'll also be looking for new stories and oral health workers to highlight, so drop me a line, and you may be featured in the next edition.

Feedback and suggestions can be sent to [DPH.OralHealth@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.OralHealth@illinois.gov). I'll get back to you as soon as I can!

## October is National Dental Hygiene Month



Started by the American Dental Hygienist's Association (ADHA) in 2009, National Dental Hygiene Month focuses on promoting good oral hygiene habits and celebrating the dental hygienists who work hard to keep our mouths healthy.

You can celebrate National Dental Hygiene Month by:

- Purchasing a new toothbrush. The American Dental Association recommends replacing your brush every 3-4 months.
- Brushing your teeth for two minutes twice a day with a toothpaste containing fluoride.
- Flossing your teeth every day. This cleans hard-to-reach areas between your teeth and under your gum line.
- Thanking a dental hygienist!