

# VNA Foundation

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**DENTAL HOUSECALLS PROGRAM RECEIVES AWARD FOR MOBILE SERVICES**  
***The VNA Foundation Recognizes Dental Lifeline Network-Illinois with the 2011***  
***Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award***

**CHICAGO, Ill. –September 2011 –**

Dental Lifeline Network-Illinois has received a special award from Chicago's VNA Foundation for outstanding work addressing the unique oral health needs of people who are elderly or have disabilities and are homebound, in nursing homes or in care centers.

Dental disease and discomfort is a painful daily reality for thousands of Chicagoans. For many elderly people or those with disabilities, however, access to dental treatment presents a special challenge. As a result of their age or disabilities, they are often unable to travel to dental offices for necessary treatment. Many cannot leave their own bedrooms, or they live in nursing homes, residential centers or attend day centers that do not provide oral health services.

And even where services are available, Medicaid covers limited procedures for adult recipients and many people simply go without. Moreover, because of the poor reimbursement rate, many dentists will not accept Medicaid and for those people who cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket for services, debilitating pain and compromised overall health often results.

Providing oral healthcare to people who are elderly or have disabilities and cannot easily visit a dentist requires creative solutions. One truly exceptional service, *Dental HouseCalls*, a program of Dental Lifeline Network - Illinois, was recently awarded the 2011 Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award by the *VNA Foundation of Chicago*. The award, named in honor of a longstanding, highly devoted and extremely valued VNA volunteer and Board member, recognizes a VNA Foundation grantee that *uses mobile health services in a particularly innovative, effective and/or impactful way*.

Dental Lifeline Network - Illinois and the Chicago Dental Society established the Dental HouseCalls Program thirty years ago to help elderly Chicagoans and those with disabilities by bringing dental treatment directly to where they live or to the facilities where they regularly receive services. Dental HouseCalls uses a van to transport a fully equipped, portable dental "office" to patients. A coordinator links patients with five

participating licensed dentists, drives the van equipped with the modular dental office, sets up the equipment at patient bedsides or in the facility, and assists the dentists. Since its inception, Dental HouseCalls has treated more than 35,500 Chicagoans. Program services are provided at no cost to the patient and 70 percent of treatment costs are donated by participating dentists.

“One of Mrs. Davis’ particular interests is health care for the underserved as provided by mobile health units,” said Rob DiLeonardi, Executive Director of the VNA Foundation of Chicago. “She was always rightfully determined that the VNA’s current work accurately reflect its heritage, and viewed the teams of healthcare providers who deliver service on-site via their mobile health vans and buses as perhaps the closest link to the horse-drawn carriages and traveling nurses used by the original Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago.”

For this reason, it was the decision of the VNA board that the best way to honor Mrs. Davis’s four decades of service was to create the Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award, a grant to highlight and honor this particular method of healthcare delivery. Although there were many candidates from which to select for this award, Dental Lifeline Network - Illinois and its Dental HouseCalls Program, that has for many years worked to address the oral health needs of underserved persons, was the unanimous choice for this distinction. In the current fiscal year, the Dental HouseCalls Program will provide dental care to more than 1,100 people who are elderly or have disabilities.

### **About Dental Lifeline Network – Illinois**

Dental Lifeline Network – Illinois is a humanitarian program and part of a national network providing access to comprehensive dental care for people with disabilities or who are elderly or medically fragile. The Illinois Dental HouseCalls program began in 1981 in conjunction with the Chicago Dental Society serving people in nursing homes, individuals with developmental disabilities in residential or day centers and people who are homebound who cannot easily travel to dentists’ offices and have very little income. A second program, Donated Dental Services (DDS), began in 1990 in conjunction with the Illinois Dental Society and currently is supported by 854 dentists and 241 laboratories who volunteer for DDS. Over the past year, the two programs generated dental care valued at over \$1.1 million for 1,063 vulnerable people. For information on obtaining help from Dental HouseCalls, please contact Melissa Bosworth at 720.287.6184 or [mbosworth@DentalLifeline.org](mailto:mbosworth@DentalLifeline.org)

### **About the VNA Foundation**

Since 1995, the VNA Foundation has operated exclusively as a grant making foundation, giving financial support to nonprofit organizations offering home- and community-based care to the medically underserved. In 2011, the VNA Foundation awarded 54 grants amounting to more than \$2 million. Recipients of the grants include a variety of agencies providing health care and health services to the working poor, the homeless, and the disenfranchised. For more information on the VNA Foundation, please visit [www.vnafoundation.net](http://www.vnafoundation.net).