Connecting Veterans to Care: Spotlight on the Kaufman Fund

By Kobby Boateng, MCOH Community Outreach & Project Development Director

Throughout October, I had the opportunity to attend several events and connect with organizations working to improve oral health across Missouri. One organization I want to highlight is The Kaufman Fund, a St. Louis-based organization dedicated to improving the lives of veterans by connecting them with essential services, and providing them with services including dental care.

Access to dental care can have a significant impact on a veteran's quality of life, particularly for those who face financial or logistical barriers to receiving treatment. The Kaufman Fund helps address these challenges by partnering with organizations such as A.T. Still University (ATSU), SIU-E Dental School, St. Louis Community College's Dental Hygiene program, and private dental providers to connect veterans with free or affordable dental services.

What makes The Kaufman Fund's work particularly valuable is its comprehensive approach to supporting veterans. While approximately one-quarter of its budget is dedicated to dental care, the organization also provides access to resources such as food assistance, chiropractic and mental health services, along with free tax preparation, legal services, Christmas trees, and warm clothing for those who are housing insecure. Working within a 90-mile radius of the Gateway Arch, the fund coordinates dental services for more than 500-600 veterans annually.

Its dental initiatives help veterans access essential treatments, including tooth extractions, cleanings, and dentures. Beyond helping coordinate dental services, The Kaufman Fund may also be able to assist with transportation for veterans who have difficulty getting to appointments. By coordinating care and helping veterans access restorative services following extractions, the organization supports not only their oral health but also their comfort, function, and overall quality of life.

During my conversation with Michele Burghaurdt, the Dental Program Administrator, I learned about the organization's willingness to expand its support to more veterans. The Kaufman Fund's involvement in the MCOH's Veterans Oral Health Workgroup is another valuable aspect of this partnership. We greatly value the opportunity to collaborate with The Kaufman Fund and learn from its experience serving veterans. Partnerships like this strengthen our collective efforts to identify gaps in access to care, connect veterans with available resources, and develop meaningful strategies to improve veteran oral health across Missouri. The organization also welcomes new opportunities to collaborate with volunteer dentists willing to provide services to veterans at no cost.

As we continue working to improve veteran oral health across Missouri, partnerships like this are essential. Connecting veterans with existing community resources can help address gaps in access to care while building a stronger network of support for those who have served our country.

How can you get involved? Dental professionals interested in volunteering their time, as well as organizations looking to strengthen their support for veterans, can explore opportunities to collaborate with The Kaufman Fund. Individuals can also sign up to volunteer at one of the fund's upcoming programs. By working together, we can help more veterans access the dental care they need and deserve.

The Kaufman Fund is an example of how community partnerships can make a meaningful difference in veteran oral health. As we work toward a healthier Missouri, strengthening these connections will be important to ensuring that veterans are not left behind.

Learn more or get involved:

- Website: https://www.thekaufmanfund.org
- Contact: Michele Burghaurdt at michele@thekaufmanfund.org

The Kaufman Fund

Helping Veterans




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