

Oral Health *Foundation*

A DSM INITIATIVE

For immediate release

Contact:
Kristie DiSalvo
617-482-0042



(Photo: l to r: Dan Driscoll (Geiger-Gibson Health Center), Dr. Chester Douglass, Dr. Richard Ferraro, and Ralph Fuccillo (Oral Health Foundation))

LOCAL DENTIST HONORED FOR OPENING First in Nation Dental Clinic in Community Health Center

(Boston, MA) – The Oral Health Foundation recently honored Dr. Richard Ferraro for establishing the country’s first dental clinic in a community health center – a concept that began in Dorchester at the Columbia Point Community Health Center in 1967 and was quickly replicated across the U.S.

Dr. Ferraro was the first to provide underserved communities with access to comprehensive oral health services and emergency treatment in what is now known as the Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center in Dorchester. The

pioneering concept quickly spread across Boston and to cities throughout the U.S. Thanks to Ferraro's model, thousands of children and adults have access to oral healthcare – many for the first time in their lives.

“Rick Ferraro had a tremendous impact on the field of community oral healthcare,” said Dennis Leonard of Delta Dental of Massachusetts, which funds the Oral Health Foundation. “He not only provided a model for providing critical, comprehensive care but also encouraged hundreds of dental students and dentists to move into urban communities to treat vulnerable populations.”

Ralph Fuccillo, President of the Oral Health Foundation, Senator Jack Hart (First Suffolk District, Boston), Pat Edraos, Policy Director for the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, and Dr. Chester Douglass of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine spoke, each praised Dr. Ferraro's innovations in community dental care. Dr. Ferraro was the first to incorporate oral health records into medical records, establishing a critical link between oral health and overall health. This practice changed the way many physicians viewed oral health across the U.S., reinforcing the link between oral health and overall health.

Ralph Fuccillo presented Dan Driscoll, CEO of Harbor Health Services, Inc., manager of the Geiger Gibson Health Center (among others) a plaque noting Dr. Ferraro's contributions for display in the health center's lobby. Current staff from the Geiger-Gibson health center and dentists who served with Dr. Ferraro filled the room.

A letter from Sen. Edward Kennedy was read at the ceremony. “It was Dr. Ferraro's compassion that drove him to create the clinic in the face of overwhelming odds. It was his compassion that helped him see that oral health is fundamental to a person's dignity and sense of self-worth,” Sen. Kennedy wrote. “Through the force of Dr. Ferraro's compassion and conviction that healthcare is a fundamental right for all people, thousands of people today receive high quality dental care at community health centers across the country.”

“We need more leaders like Rick Ferraro,” said Ralph Fuccillo, president of the Oral Health Foundation. “There are still many children and adults who do not have access to the services they need.”

About the Oral Health Foundation

The Oral Health Foundation was established in 2000 by Delta Dental of Massachusetts to improve the oral health of underserved communities in Massachusetts through programs that increase access to high quality preventive oral health services. The Foundation reaches vulnerable populations through its grants to community-based organizations that provide preventive oral health

services and promote the importance of preventive oral health through collaborative, community-wide awareness programs, such as the Watch Your Mouth Campaign.