

# Veterans to Receive Free Dental Work Through SIU Dental School on Veterans Day

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - In honor of Veterans Day, veterans can receive comprehensive dental care for no fee through the SIU School of Dental Medicine on Thursday, Nov. 9, 2023.

“There are way more veterans than you would anticipate that are without a dental provider or dental insurance,” explained Dr. Katie Kosten, the school’s Director of Community Dentistry. “So that’s an unmet need in that population, and we’re positioned to be able to give back in that way, so we try to take that day to do that for them.”

Veterans can contact the school at 618-474-7200 to schedule their appointment for Nov. 9. Third and fourth-year dental students will see patients that day, under the faculty’s

supervision. They will complete as much dental work as possible for every veteran who walks in the door.

“This is a service we’ve provided for the last several years where we invite veterans to come to SIU School of Dental Medicine to receive, basically, as much care as we can provide in one day for free,” Kosten said. “We wind up doing anything from cleanings and x-rays and exams, all the way to extractions and fillings, and we do it all for free that day.”

The students will address the most urgent concerns first. If a patient needs more intensive dental work, such as dentures or crowns, the school can help you get on the waiting list for additional care in the future.

Kosten noted that while the Department of Veterans Affairs connects veterans with resources and benefits, they must meet “very specific qualifications” to receive dental care through the VA. This leaves many veterans unable to regularly see a dentist. The School of Dental Medicine tries to close this gap every Veterans Day; they usually see between 80 and 110 veterans.

While the event is “rewarding” for all of the participating students, Kosten said it holds a special significance for students and faculty members who are veterans themselves. Ultimately, the event is about giving back and connecting with the community through dentistry.

“I think that day has meaning for all of us, but I think it has a special meaning for those on our faculty and our students who have served because they share a commonality with those veterans that they can reflect on and be appreciative of and have empathy for,” Kosten said. “We do want to recognize our veterans and, in our way, say thank you for their service.”

If you are a veteran who needs dental care, register for a free appointment by calling 618-474-7200. The SIU School of Dental Medicine will see patients throughout the day on Thursday, Nov. 9, 2023, in their clinic at 2800 College Avenue in Alton. Appointments are available until Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023.