



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## School-Based Dental Program Gives Students A Reason To Smile

JOHN FRIOT November 10, 2016



It goes without saying that providing quality health care—including dental care—is critically important to the well-being and growth of children. However, in rural regions of our state accessing care can be a challenge. Today, too many children—especially in rural areas—aren't getting the oral health care they need, potentially creating more serious problems down the road, like speech difficulties, tooth loss and serious infections.

That's why in recent months I worked to expand "S-miles to Go," a program that uses portable dental equipment and a mobile dental van, which are provided and staffed by the

University at Buffalo's School of Dental Medicine. This unique effort helps to bring dental care to schools, especially in areas that have a shortage of available dental care.

For several years, S-miles to Go has operated in the Southern Tier and Western New York. After discussing the need for dental health programs with Hannibal Central School District Superintendent Christopher Staats, I worked to bring the program to Central New York. Last month, the mobile dental van visited Fairley Elementary and provided students with the treatment and restorative care they need without having to leave school. I was able to get a firsthand look at the program, which is not only providing much-needed dental care, but also is giving dental students an opportunity to learn more about potential careers in a rural setting.

The visit by the mobile dental van is just the first step toward providing all children with the dental care they need. In addition to working to expand the S-miles to Go program to Central New York, I was also pleased to have successfully advocated for funding that will make possible a study that will look into further expanding the program into the North Country.

As co-chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, I applaud the S-Miles to Go program and its ongoing effort to bring dental care to our schools, especially in those areas that have a critical shortage of available dental care. I look forward to continuing to work to ensure all young people know the importance of oral health and are able to access the dental care they need.