



CONGRESSMAN

**JIM LANGEVIN**

Representing Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional District

**April 17, 2014**

## **Starts with a Smile**

Good dental care is essential to overall health and wellness, and yet many struggling families are deterred by the high cost of treatment. Rhode Island Mission of Mercy identified that need and filled it, and I am proud to support a program that last year alone provided more than \$525,000 worth of free care to more than 900 Rhode Islanders.

That's an incredible figure. But the dental and medical professionals involved with this event aren't satisfied just yet. This year, they hope to provide more than 1,000 people with free dental care. Procedures are as simple as cleanings or as complex as tooth extractions and fillings. Some of the work is extensive, and some of the patients have not been to a dentist in many years. They feel anxious and, unfortunately, sometimes ashamed that they are in this situation.

When they meet the volunteers, that apprehension fades away.

I can't think of an event that puts the Rhode Island spirit on display more than the Rhode Island Mission of Mercy Dental Clinic. Scheduled this year for May 31 and June 1, the clinic brings together dental and medical professionals willing to donate their time and talents, and countless other volunteers who register recipients and try to put them at ease. Each year, the line begins to form in the middle of the night. Rhode Islanders camp out at the Community College of Rhode Island's Lincoln campus for the opportunity to receive dental care. The crowd speaks to the tremendous need, and I cannot say thank you enough to all of the generous men and women who donate their time and talent in order for the clinic to be successful, including Crossroads RI President Anne Nolan, Delta Dental Vice President Kathryn Shanley, CCRI Dental Health Programs Chair Kathleen Gazzola, Rhode Island Oral Health Foundation (RIOHF) Vice President Dr. Deborah Fuller and Blue Cross Blue Shield Executive Vice President Michele Lederberg. Most of all, I want to thank RIOHF Founder and RI Mission of Mercy President Dr. Jeffrey Dodge. Without these incredible people, the clinic would not be possible.

As Dr. Dodge and Lt. Governor Liz Roberts said at the kickoff event, they hope someday the clinic is no longer needed.

But until then, I for one am very grateful that it is here.