



VIU STUDENTS BRIGHTEN CHILDREN'S SMILES

SUMMARY: VIU's Dental Hygiene and Child and Youth Care students team up to provide free teeth cleanings for low income families.

VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/NwHWODiLOWo>

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NANAIMO, BC: "If the children walk away with a smile on their face, we know we've done a good job," says Connor Edwards, a fourth-year student in Vancouver Island University's (VIU's) [Child and Youth Care](#) (CYC) program.

The CYC and [Dental Hygiene](#) programs have teamed up to organize the Healthy Kids Dental Clinic – a free or by-donation dental check-up service for low-income families.

"We started three years ago after having community discussions on how we can better serve families in the area," says Teri Derksen, VIU CYC Professor.

Healthy Kids is a community initiative created by the CYC's [Centre for Community Outreach and Care](#), which focuses on social justice-inspired activities to support children and families in the Harewood area. Third-year students advertise the program by reaching out to schools and through social media and coordinate appointments, while the dental hygiene students perform the dental work for the children.

"Routine dental care isn't financially accessible to everyone – especially for families without extended health-care plans – so having this service at the university is invaluable to us," says a mother of three children accessing the clinic, who asked to remain anonymous. "The students take the time to get the kids comfortable and make it really fun for them."

The clinic operates on a scheduled Saturday every year and sees about 30 children throughout the day. Dr. Alex Chen volunteers as the in-house dentist and 18 dental hygiene students in both first and second year provide teeth cleanings, X-rays and oral hygiene training to patients.

"This is a great opportunity for us to practice our dental skills while working with younger patients," says Jaime Wagner, second-year Dental Hygiene student. "Our main focus is to make this a fun, memorable experience for the children so they continue to take care of their oral health throughout their life."

For details on the next Healthy Kids Dental Clinic, families are encouraged to email VIUCommunityDentalClinic@gmail.com or check out the [VIU Dental Hygiene Program](#) Facebook page.

The Dental Hygiene program provides teeth cleaning services to the public at a low-cost throughout the school year as well at their [dental clinic](#).

Permalink: <https://news.viu.ca/viu-students-brighten-childrens-smiles>

Photo Caption: VIU Students Brighten Children’s Smiles at Healthy Kids Dental Day. **Photo Credit:** Vancouver Island University

*A variety of photos have been attached to be used at your discretion.

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