Community Impact

The St. Luke’s Dental Health Center (DHC) was organized by concerned area dentists to address the increase in unmet dental needs of low-income children throughout East Central Iowa. Early on, St. Luke’s Hospital agreed to be the “home” of the DHC, donating space and other program support including administrative leadership, fiscal management, and in-kind clinical support such as equipment sterilization. 340B savings makes St. Luke’s support possible. The clinic also receives philanthropic support.

Today the DHC is a safety-net dental clinic providing comprehensive dental care for children through age 18 from low-income families and people with developmental disabilities.

Comprehensive dental care includes:

- **Preventive** – exams, x-rays, cleaning, fluoride, dental sealants
- **Operative** – fillings, stainless steel caps, dental pulp treatments
- **Oral surgery** – baby tooth and some adult tooth extractions
- **Endodontics** – some root canal treatments on adult teeth
- **Outreach** – dental screenings, sealants, and fluoride varnish for children in local school classrooms

St. Luke’s DHC patients are considered high-risk. About 65% of new patients have dental decay. Children from low-income families make up approximately 90% of the total patient population at the DHC. The DHC is the only local access program available for oral health care in Linn and surrounding counties. The next closest access program is in Waterloo, more than 50 miles away.