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Special Olympics Minnesota athletes to receive free dental care on UCare's Mobile Dental Clinic

Athletes to receive preventive, restorative care Wednesday in Duluth aboard a "dentist's office on wheels"

MINNEAPOLIS, April 11, 2011 — Nine Special Olympics athletes will receive essential dental care Wednesday, April 13, when [UCare's Mobile Dental Clinic](#) is in Duluth. The free preventive and restorative dental care is provided as part of [Special Olympics Minnesota's Special Smiles®](#) program.

All nine athletes were referred for follow-up care during a free Special Smiles® screening event held March 19 in Duluth. UCare is providing each of the athletes up to two hours of free dental care in its Mobile Dental Clinic from faculty-supervised dental and dental hygiene students with the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry.

The clinic is a new, state-of-the art, 43-foot, "dentist's office on wheels." The athletes will receive preventive care, such as cleanings, sealants, and fluoride treatments, as well as simple restorative care such as fillings. The athletes' appointments are between 9 a.m.–3 p.m., Wednesday, April 13, while the Mobile Dental Clinic is parked at the First United Methodist Church, 230 East Skyline Parkway in Duluth. The Mobile Dental Clinic also is in Duluth for the week of April 11-15 to provide dental care to UCare members in the region who have difficulty accessing quality dental services.

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“We screen athletes throughout the state through our Healthy Athletes initiative, but we’ve found that our Duluth-area athletes tend to have the most difficulties finding dentists where they can receive follow-up dental care,” said Heather Harmer, Special Olympics Minnesota Initiatives Manager. “That’s why it is so valuable for our athletes to receive this care through UCare’s Mobile Dental Clinic. UCare is truly providing a service to these athletes that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to get.”

“We are very pleased to work with Special Olympics Minnesota and provide needed dental care to these athletes through the Special Smiles program,” said Ghita Worcester, UCare’s Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Marketing. “UCare has long been committed to improving access to dental care for our members and communities, and ensuring that our programs and services serve individuals with disabilities and their families. This day of dental care is a wonderful example of what can be done for people when organizations like Special Olympics and UCare combine resources and goals.”

About Special Smiles®

The Special Smiles® program is a core component of Special Olympics Minnesota’s [Healthy Athletes®](#) initiative, created to focus attention on the overall health issues facing Special Olympics athletes and others with intellectual disabilities. Through Special Smiles® screenings held at Special Olympics tournaments, athletes and their parents or caregivers receive important information about the athletes’ dental health. Athletes take home an oral health report card and are referred for urgent follow-up care if needed. Volunteers also educate athletes on proper brushing and flossing techniques and talk with them about how diet affects their total health.

[Special Olympics Minnesota](#) offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round sports training and competition. Through Special Olympics’ athletic, health and leadership programs, people with intellectual disabilities transform themselves, their communities and the world.

About UCare

UCare (www.ucare.org) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 220,000 members. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver innovative health coverage products for:

- Individuals and families enrolled in income-based Minnesota Health Care Programs, such as MinnesotaCare and Prepaid Medical Assistance Program.
- Adults with disabilities and Medicare beneficiaries with chronic health conditions.
- Minnesotans dually eligible for Medical Assistance and Medicare.
- Medicare-eligible individuals throughout Minnesota and in western Wisconsin.

UCare addresses health care disparities and care access issues through its UCare Fund grants and a broad array of community initiatives. The health plan received a Top Workplaces 2010 honor from the *Star Tribune*.

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