

New McGill Dental Clinic gives free care to the needy

By Chris Bumbray
The Suburban

For many low-income residents in the city, a trip to the dentist's office is a luxury they simply cannot afford. Luckily, there is a brand-new resource at their disposal — The Jim Lund Dental Clinic; a joint effort between the McGill Faculty of Dentistry, and the Welcome Hall Mission, that offers free dental care to the needy.

Housed in the mission's offices on De Courcelle Street, the clinic is open three days a week, and offers all the basic dental services. "Drill and fill" is how the mission's executive director, Cyril Morgan, explains the typical services provided by the dental students, and residents that volunteer at the clinic. This usually consists of a cleaning, and fillings if needed. All services are provided at absolutely no cost to the patient.

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Dr. Paul Sweet is one of the many volunteer dentists that donates their time to the Jim Lund Dental Clinic, which gives the underprivileged full dental care at no cost.

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"One of the common problems we usually get are people that come in, and haven't seen a dentist in years," says Morgan. "As a result, they have a lot of problems with their mouths, ranging from ulcers, to germs that accumulate and result in infections," he adds. In order to be admitted to the clinic, prospective patients must be able to demonstrate that they're on a low income, or be referred by another organization that aids the underprivileged.

Once someone is accepted as a patient, they typically have to wait about a month for their first appointment. "We only do appointments," says Morgan, who adds that emergencies are referred to the Montreal General Hospital. Root canals and extractions may be done at the clinic

itself if the dentist deems them necessary. "Dentures are possible," says Morgan, "but those will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis."

The clinic is named for the late dean of the McGill Faculty of Dentistry, Jim Lund, who passed away suddenly in 2009. "He was a person who really wanted to see the outreach program for dentistry enlarged," says Morgan. "It was under his tutelage that the mobile clinics offered by the university really took off."

So far, the clinic has two dental chairs set up, although there is room for a third, and Morgan hopes that the mission will soon be able to raise enough money to have another put in. With the current resources, the clinic can see roughly 32 patients a week. Anyone wishing to contribute funds or equipment to the clinic can visit their website, www.welcome-hallmission.com, for more information.

