

*Archstone Foundation and  
The Aging & Public Health Section of  
The American Public Health Association*

*present the*

# 2020 Award for Excellence in Program Innovation



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American Public  
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2020 AWARD WINNER

## Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center

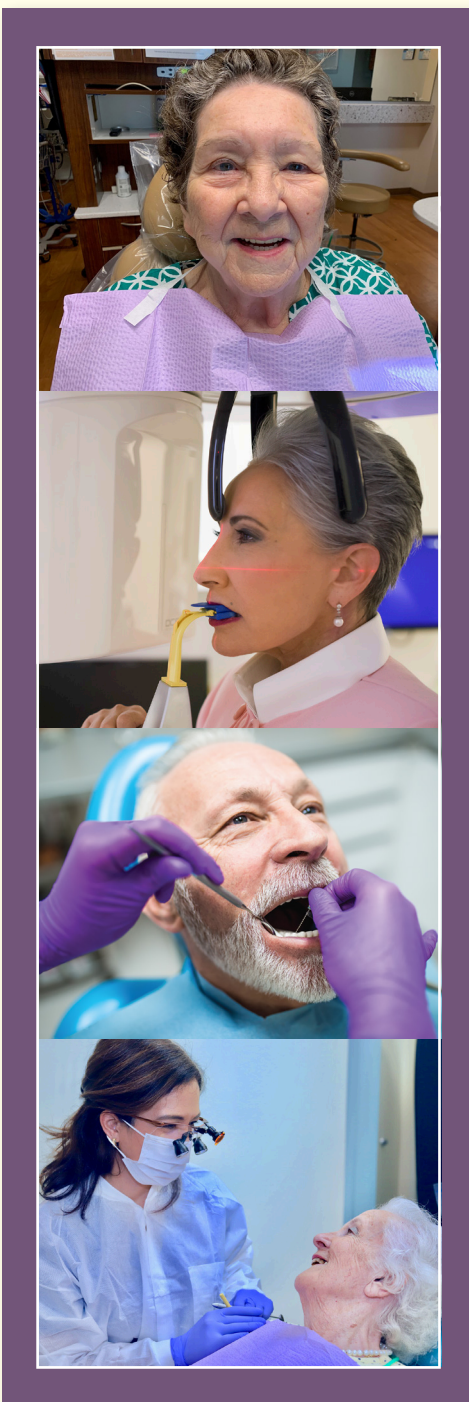
### *Integrated Oral Healthcare for Vulnerable Older Adults*

#### ORGANIZATION

The Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center (SDC) was established in 2015 in response to a need for improved access to oral healthcare for older adults across the country. The SDC is embedded within a senior wellness center and Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), providing low-income older adults with serious and complex oral healthcare needs in San Diego easy access to a dental home. The SDC uses an integrated care model to provide high-quality, affordable care, serving over 1,200 older adults with nearly 14,000 visits, to date.

#### PROGRAM

The SDC fills an important gap in the oral health safety-net and bridges community-based services with healthcare. According to the National Health Interview Survey from 2017, seven in 10 older adults have no dental insurance and only 26% have visited a dentist in the past year. Most Medicare plans do not offer a dental benefit and older adults that do qualify for the Medicaid dental program often have difficulty finding providers who accept the low reimbursement rates. The SDC's program design is simple and based on removing major barriers to care (cost, location, and access) that currently exist for most low-income older adults. The SDC was designed and located where older adults already frequent.



Prior to their visit, patients complete a Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment to evaluate social, medical, and oral health needs, which are part of a referral system to connect patients to other possible social or medical services. Dental Center staff take patient's vitals and blood glucose levels at the beginning of each appointment and obtain medical clearances to ensure safe and effective treatment. Patients are educated on their treatment options prior to proceeding. Volunteer dental specialists provide on-site care one day per month for patients who are unable to afford specialty care off-site.

The SDC utilizes cutting-edge technology to better serve patients, including 3D imaging machines to accommodate patients in wheelchairs and a same-day crown machine. The American Dental Association's Chairside app is utilized as an all-in-one mobile resource that includes dental images and animations to help patients understand the proposed treatment options. To meet the diverse needs of the San Diego area, the SDC accommodates treatment in the patient's native language by employing multi-lingual staff and coordinating telephonic interpretation.

The SDC's overall goal is to design a sustainable model for holistic patient-centered care, to be shared or replicated in California and across the county. Core programmatic elements of the SDC include:

1. Implementing whole-person oral healthcare that considers medical, social, and behavioral health needs and conditions;
2. Bringing oral healthcare to a trusted, well-attended community location; and
3. Engaging older adults in their own care through education, treatment planning, and delivery.

## **OUTCOMES**

The Journal of the California Dental Association's April 2019 issue documents an evaluation of the program, lessons learned, and considerations for how other providers can better care for older adults. An evaluation of the first cohort of SDC patients pre- and post-treatment revealed changes in the Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment, including:

- Absolute reduction in dental pain in 20% of patients;
- Sixty percent improvement in self-rated oral health;
- Eighteen percent improvement in chewing;
- Twenty-seven percent improvement in food limitation; and
- Significant (20%) overall improvement in general pain.

The SDC was selected as a 2020 rotation training site for New York University Langone's Advanced Education in General Dentistry Program, and hosted two interns this past summer, which will allow SDC to sustain their work in providing necessary dental care to low-income older adults and to train providers in geriatric dentistry.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

In partnership with Serving Seniors' Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center and Gary and Mary West PACE, the SDC has become part of a much-needed "one-stop



shop" where the dental, health, and wellness needs of low-income older adults can be conveniently accessed in a trusted and well-attended community-based location. Initially, the SDC reached the 500 low-income older adults who visited the Senior Wellness Center for daily meals. In 2019, the SDC expanded to North County San Diego, where the dental clinic is co-located with the Gary and Mary West PACE.

The SDC also partners with the Dental Lifeline Network, a nonprofit dental organization that connects a volunteer network of dentists and dental labs to deliver dental services to patients with needs beyond the center's capacity.

## **DISSEMINATION**

The SDC has shared their model and initial findings through national media outlets and academic presentations around the country, underscoring the importance of creating access to dental services and integrating these services into typical healthcare services. In addition to publishing its results, the SDC proactively works to influence policy makers to increase dental benefits (both scope and rates) for older adults. The SDC plans to develop a toolkit to share with the broader community to encourage replication in other parts of the country. Patient education resources have also been placed online for home access during the COVID-19 pandemic. For patients who have completed their dental treatment, the SDC has established an Oral Health Peer Ambassador Program to engage older adults in promoting oral health among their friends and community.

By targeting older adults and providing whole-person care, the SDC is able to improve patients' oral health and connect them with needed community-based services. Through oral health education and treatment, comprehensive assessment and referral, and integration across multiple organizations, the Senior Dental Center is "reconnecting" the mouth with the rest of the body and raising the status of this vital barometer of health.

To learn more, please contact:



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## DEDICATION

The Award for Excellence in Program Innovation was established by an endowment from Archstone Foundation, to the Aging & Public Health Section of the American Public Health Association, to recognize best practice models in caring for older adults. National programs that innovatively link academic theory with applied practice in the field of public health and aging are considered annually for this award. In the 20th century, public health led efforts to reduce the harms of communicable diseases produced fantastic gains in life expectancy. In the 21st century, as the aging of the population brings new challenges to the fore, such as cognitive impairment, multiple chronic illness, and functional impairment, we believe that public health again has an essential role to play. It is our hope that these model programs will be replicated and will continue to be evaluated in an effort to enhance services for older people throughout the United States.

To Irena Pesis-Katz, PhD, Chair of the Archstone Foundation Award Selection Committee, and the other members of the Selection Advisory Committee, we extend our deep appreciation for their efforts in reviewing the nominations and selecting the outstanding program to receive this year's award.

To the winner of the 2020 Archstone Foundation Award for Excellence in Program Innovation, all the nominees, and to all who participated in the award process as applicants or reviewers, we offer our best wishes for continued success in their commitment to develop service models in the field of aging and public health.



**Christopher A. Langston, PhD**  
*President & Chief Executive Officer*  
Archstone Foundation



**Carolyn Mendez-Luck, PhD, MPH**  
*Chair, Aging & Public Health Section*  
American Public Health Association

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University of Maryland Baltimore County

For a list of previous Award for Excellence in Program Innovation winners go to  
[www.Archstone.org](http://www.Archstone.org)

## PAST AWARD WINNERS

2019	Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Community Care Connections, Rochester, New York
2018	Jewish Home Family's Parkinson's Center, Jewish Home Family, Rockleigh, New Jersey
2017	Prevention & Wellness Trust Fund (PWTF), Massachusetts Department of Public Health
2016	Support And Services at Home (SASH), Cathedral Square Corporation
2015	Student-Run Free Clinic Project Eldercare Program, University of California, San Diego
2014	Mobile Medicare Health Clinics, University of the Pacific
2013	Age-Friendly New York City, A Partnership between the Office of the Mayor, New York City Council, and New York Academy of Medicine
2012	Livable Community Initiative, City of Kingsport
2012	Healthy Steps in Silicon Valley, The Health Trust
2011	PEARLS, University of Washington, Health Promotion Research Center
2010	Area Geriatric Education Scholars Program for Upper Peninsula Youth (AGES), Upper Peninsula Health Education Corporation
2009	PREPARE: Disaster and Emergency Preparedness for Long-Term Care, Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging
2008	Guided Care: Improving Chronic Care for High Risk Seniors, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health
2007	The Dancing Heart Program, Kairos Dance Theatre
2006	Brain Get Your Mind Moving, New England Cognitive Center
2005	Legacy Corps for Health and Independent Living, University of Maryland, Center on Aging
2004	Dignified Transportation for Seniors, Independent Transportation Network
2003	Alzheimer's Health Education Initiative, Alzheimer's Association
2002	Kinship Support Network, Edgewood Center for Children and Families
2001	Groceries to Go, Elder Services Network
2000	Experience Corps, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Center on Aging and Health
2000	Assistive Equipment Demonstration Project, University of Massachusetts, Gerontology Institute
1999	Senior Wellness Project, Northshore Senior Center
1998	A Matter of Balance, Boston University, Royal Center for Enhancement of Late-Life Function

### AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

APHA champions the health of all people and all communities, strengthens the public health profession, and speaks out for public health issues and policies backed by science. The mission of the Aging and Public Health Section of APHA is to promote the health and well-being of individuals as they age by improving their health, function, quality of life, and financial security.

### ARCHSTONE FOUNDATION

Archstone Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan, private foundation dedicated to improving the health and well-being of older Californians and their caregivers. The Foundation has awarded more than \$119 million in grants since it was established in 1987.