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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New York State Dental Foundation Announces Salute Vets with a Smile Program**

*Initiative links veterans in need with volunteer dentists for free dental services.*

**ALBANY, N.Y.**—About 7.8 million veterans enrolled with the Veterans Affairs healthcare system are not eligible for the program’s dental benefits. [According to a 2021 report](#), veterans are more likely to experience poor dental health, including higher rates of tooth decay and gum disease, compared to the general population.

The New York State Dental Foundation, alongside the New York State Dental Association (NYSDA), is dedicated to making sure veterans receive the oral care they desperately need. A new initiative for 2024, the Salute Vets with a Smile program connects veterans with volunteer dentists, who will provide free services. The dentists will create treatment plans for their veteran patients to ensure problems are properly addressed.

“No one is more deserving of quality dental care than those who have served our state and nation in the armed forces,” said Loren Baim, DDS, a practicing dentist in Glens Falls and trustee of the New York State Dental Foundation. “Our program is designed to provide complete and comprehensive care to veterans. The New York State Dental Foundation is committed to making a difference.”

The program seeks to address the root of the dental problems, connect veterans with a dental home, and provide resources for proper oral hygiene in the future. Volunteer dentists have already begun treating veterans, leading to positive outcomes and procedures for issues that otherwise would have gone unaddressed.

“It’s kind of a miracle that I got wind of this program,” said Ed Peterson, a veteran who served in the United States Airforce and is currently being treated as part of the program, which he heard about through a coworker. “I’ve never really seen anything like this. It’s always felt like dental care just wasn’t accessible to me unless I could afford to pay out of pocket. It’s kind of like finding a needle in a haystack.”

Veterans seeking dental care and dentists interested in volunteering can sign up through the [dental foundation’s website](#). To date, more than two dozen dentists have volunteered throughout the state.

**About the New York State Dental Foundation:**

*The New York State Dental Foundation, founded in 1980, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to improving the oral health of all New Yorkers and supporting outreach to communities in need.*

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