



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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## Delta Dental of Illinois Awards Grants to Further Oral Health Care in Illinois

*Five Southern Illinois Dental Students honored for community outreach and volunteer work*

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (May 12, 2016)** – Delta Dental of Illinois awarded grants to five students at Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Dental Medicine. Jasmine Abdullh, Seth Barnett, Ashley Cain, Matthew Tobler and Mark Walsh received the grants in recognition of their outstanding work while pursuing dental degrees.

As part of its commitment to supporting local dentists and improving the oral health of Illinoisans, Delta Dental of Illinois recognizes outstanding dental students at Illinois schools each year through its student grant program. Delta Dental of Illinois awards these grants to students who have passed their national board exams, demonstrate an interest or participate in community outreach, have completed research on the improvement of oral health in a community or have declared interest in the pediatric dentistry specialty. This year, Delta Dental of Illinois will provide \$10,000 in grants to five students who were selected by the grants committee of the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation.

“Improving access to dental care for all Illinoisans is an important part of our overall mission,” said Bernie Glossy, president and CEO of Delta Dental of Illinois. “Through our student grant program, we not only help dental students advance their career, but we also provide a way for Illinoisans to receive the dental care they need. We are incredibly honored to award these grants to these deserving students.”

**Jasmine Abdullh, of Springfield, Ill.,** decided to pursue a career in dentistry when she was an undergraduate research assistant at the University of Illinois. Her research focused on oral health practices at child care facilities. She continued her passion for research and oral health upon entering dental school and has traveled to multiple conferences to present her research findings. In addition, Abdullh traveled to Central America to help provide dental care and educate patients about the importance of good oral health habits. Throughout dental school, she has been involved with Give Kids a Smile Day, Mission of Mercy and other local oral health events. After graduation, Abdullh plans to

work in an underserved area of Chicago and practice as a public health dentist. She also plans to become fluent in Spanish and proficient in American Sign Language, so she can serve a broader range of patients.

**Seth Barnett, of Bloomington, Ill.,** is interested in general dentistry as well as endodontics because of the challenges these fields present. He plans to attend the Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) residency program at SIU in the fall and ultimately pursue a residency in endodontics. Through dental school, Barnett conducted research on salivary gland cancer, and he presented his findings at the Annual Meeting and Exhibition of the American Association for Dental Research in Los Angeles. Through Southern Illinois University, Barnett is actively involved in the Delta Sigma Delta fraternity, the Illinois State Dental Society and the Christian Dental Society. He volunteered his time and dental skills at school as a tutor in fixed prosthodontics, in the community at events like Mission of Mercy and abroad by providing dental care to patients in Jamaica.

**Ashley Cain, of Mahomet, Ill.,** was drawn to pursue a career in dentistry after she spent more than 100 hours shadowing various dental professionals as part of her undergraduate studies. As a dental student, Cain worked in SIU's East St. Louis dental clinic treating children and educating them on oral health and proper hygiene. She also used her skills to treat patients who needed dentures. Cain is a SIU Cares Scholar and attends monthly meetings to address common issues pertaining to rural dentistry, such as access to care, oral health education and the importance of pediatric care. She is an active volunteer and travelled to Jamaica in her second year of dental school to provide much needed dental care. Upon graduation, Cain plans to become a resident in the Advanced Education in General Dentistry program at SIU. After her residency, she hopes to own a family practice in a small, rural town. She also wants to continue to travel to developing countries for dental mission trips after graduation.

**Matthew Tobler, of O'Fallon, Ill.,** is dedicated to providing children with quality dental care and wants to pursue a career in pediatric dentistry. He has been accepted into a two-year hospital based pediatric residency in Kansas City, Mo., at Children's Mercy Hospital. As a dental student, he conducted research and studied the effectiveness of different teaching methods for children as it pertains to the impact of sugar on oral health. Tobler is an active volunteer in the Student Conduct Committee for the SIU School of Dental Medicine, he is an assistant scoutmaster for Boy Scouts of America, he serves as the president of his church's youth program, and he has participated in various oral health events including Give Kids a Smile Day. After his residency, Tobler plans to practice dentistry in a small town where he can actively serve in the community.

**Mark Walsh, of Naperville, Ill.,** plans to provide pediatric dental care as well as treat patients with special needs after graduation. As an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, he was appointed as the division leader for the Carle Foundation Hospital, one of the largest volunteer based programs in the nation. Throughout dental school, Walsh worked with SmileHealthy, a non-profit organization delivering oral care to low-income families, where he assisted in many facets of providing dental care from charting to performing restorations and other dental procedures. He founded the Central Illinois Dental Education and Services funding organization, an international donation program, for SmileHealthy. In addition, Walsh traveled on a mission trip to Honduras to provide dental care and has volunteered in community outreach programs and oral health care events including Give Kids a Smile Day.

For more information about Delta Dental of Illinois or its student grant program, visit [deltadentalil.com](http://deltadentalil.com).

#### **About Delta Dental of Illinois**

*Delta Dental of Illinois is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and families, and more than 6,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. Delta Dental of Illinois covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members nationwide. Delta Dental of Illinois is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.*