

March 2017 Volunteer of the Month: The Telephone Pioneers



The Telephone Pioneers have been helping to combat frightening feelings during dental appointments at the ACORN Clinic through its Hug-A-Bear program for over a decade. This local organization causes a vast majority of the smiles and speedy recoveries from pediatric patients at the clinic.

Each month about 30 hand-made stuffed bears are donated to ACORN. The bears, offered in a wide array of seasonal cloth patterns, are lined up on the clinic counter during ACORN Dental Clinic's pediatric days. Children are allowed to select a bear after their appointment is over as a token for being cooperative.

From local hospitals to a local clown club, The Telephone Pioneers donates bears to multiple organizations within North Central Florida. This build-a-bear program for kids in need was created as a service project for retired and active AT&T employees.

The bears are used to comfort children who are in traumatic situations. Often times, ACORN pediatric patients require extensive dental care that causes tears and anxiety.

"We wish to bring them a moment of comfort and cheer during their current time of stress," said Bob Whiteford, spokesman from The Telephone Pioneers.

Some bears make an everlasting mark on their owners. A grandmother of an ACORN Clinic patient told The Telephone Pioneers that her teenage grandson continues to put the bear he received as a child on his bed everyday, Whiteford said. Many patients even create an entire collection of the bears they receive during appointments.

ACORN Dental Clinic is grateful to have the continued support from The Telephone Pioneers, and its Hug-A-Bear program as a treat to help spread the love and stop the tears.

ACORN Clinic is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit serving 20 North Central Florida counties with full-service medical and dental clinics. ACORN Clinic provides high quality, affordable medical care, dental care, and social services by staff and volunteers. In partnership with educational institutions, ACORN Clinic also functions as an exemplary service-learning site for health professionals.

Written by Allison Jones