

For many years, the Lloyd K Johnson Foundation has been a major benefactor to the residents of Cook County and the Grand Portage Reservation. On June 1st, 2023, a number of recipients of Lloyd K grants gathered to thank Joan Gardner-Goodno, the long-time Director of the Foundation and wish her well on her retirement. A few of us made short speeches detailing the help she gave us. Following are excerpts from my thank-you speech:

I'm Paul Nelson, Chair of Sawtooth Mountain Clinic's Oral Health Task Force and, with Dr. Alyssa Hedstrom, its co-founder.

Joan, I'm here today to say "Thank you!"

Thank You from the Oral Health Task Force for helping us get started and then supporting us, year after year.

Thank you from me for listening to what Dr. Hedstrom and I envisioned and then helping me figure out how to write a grant application.....your patience and your guidance.

After our first year, when we got organized and added Task Force members from Sawtooth Mountain Clinic, CC PHHS, North Shore Hospital, Grand Marais Family Dentistry and the Grand Portage Health Service, I contacted you and told you "We figured out how to reach each child by visiting the schools, doing oral health scans and alerting the parents of kids who needed to see the dentist. But our target group are the young parents working two jobs in the hospitality industry and they need to chose each month between buying food, gas for the pickup and dental care for the kids.....and the money's all gone before they get to the dentist part. We saw that we needed to be able to offer financial assistance."

So I came to you for the money for the assistance and you said "Send in your application" and then you gave us the money.

And then when we said we were expanding our operations to all daycares, Headstart, WIC, you said "Send in the application" and then gave us the funds for the expansion.

And then when we realized we needed to include expectant moms in our services, including creating educational materials and home visits by our task force member, the County Public Health Nurse, you said "Send in the application" and you gave us the money.

And then when we said we needed to expand our target group to include the 19-26 year olds who hadn't had the benefit of our school scans and care, you said "send in the application," and gave us the money.

And then when we said we needed to expand our services to the Headstart, Daycare and Oshki Ogimaag at the Grand Portage Reservation, you gave us the money.

And the when we expanded our services to the seniors in our area, you gave us the money.

And when all the seniors who hadn't had dental care in years because they couldn't afford it heard about our program and started to show up.....a lot of them.... we had to come to you for a second grant in one year, you didn't hesitate. You bent the rules a tad, accepted a second application and gave us the money.

And when we told you we needed to bring Nurse Anesthetists up to help us care for the children who had exceptional oral health issues so that they wouldn't have to drive to Duluth to get the services, if they could even find a dentist who would take their Medicaid, you gave us the money.

Because of your help, our kids have the lowest cavity rate in the state. Our expectant moms know how to take care of themselves and their babies. Our seniors are finally free of pain and embarrassment.

All we can say is Thank You! The children of Cook County and Grand Portage, the expectant moms and seniors thank you. The Oral Health Task Force thanks you and I thank you.

Paul