

Helping Iowa Smile - Dr. Dougherty, Ottumwa



Dr. Joseph Dougherty believes good dental care "isn't something that should be available only to those who can afford it. Everyone needs continual oral health care." He's putting that belief into action every day as a dentist at the River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa, Iowa. The dental clinic at River Hills was recently expanded through a grant from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, which allows more patients to be seen by Dr. Dougherty and his colleagues.

Dr. Dougherty speaks fluent Spanish. "When I start speaking to my patients in Spanish, I notice they relax more and feel more comfortable. Then, they tell all their friends to come to the dentist!"

That kind of growth is exactly what the River Hills Community Health Center is trying to encourage. "We want people to come see us. We don't want people to wait until a problem is harder to address," Dr. Dougherty says. "The bottom line? We want to serve those who otherwise wouldn't see a dentist. That's where we can really have an impact."

Judging by the growth of the clinic and Dr. Dougherty's busy days, it's clear the impact he hopes to have is being felt by families throughout Ottumwa. "When the community hears about us and appreciates our service, that's what our work is all about – being able to help people."