

Contact: MaryWade Burnside
Public Information Officer
Monongalia County Health Department
Morgantown, WV 26505
(304) 598-5152 | www.monchd.org
MaryWade.Burnside@wv.gov



For Immediate Release

Local man gets dental work at MCHD Dentistry through Jobs & Hope program

MORGANTOWN, WV (Feb. 24, 2021) — Heroin and other substance misuse made Brandon miserable to the point where he knew he had to get help.

“It made my life unmanageable,” said the Morgantown man, whose name has been changed to protect his identify. “It was either suicide or recovery.”

Brandon chose recovery, and on March 9, he will celebrate one year of sobriety.

He achieved it by spending time in a rehabilitation facility and attending 12-step meetings.

He’s also had some guidance from other programs.

One of those is Jobs & Hope WV, which helps those with substance use disorder find employment and even provides training.

Through Jobs & Hope WV, Brandon completed a heavy equipment operator course. He also took his Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) exam so he can pursue a career either in construction or as a truck driver.

Jobs & Hope was also able to assist him with another ongoing issue Brandon was experiencing — tooth decay.

“When you get caught up in addiction, you lose sight of your priorities,” Brandon said. “I hadn’t been to the dentist in roughly five or seven years.”

Therefore, a dental voucher provided by Jobs & Hope went a long way toward helping Brandon as he navigated his way to getting his life back on track.

“I had multiple cavities as well as the need for three root canals,” Brandon said. “So that voucher helped me stabilize some of the problems concerning my dental issues.”

MCHD Dentistry, part of Monongalia County Health Department, registered for the program in order to help Brandon, as well as other Jobs & Hope candidates down the road.

“We try to work with our patients and develop a solution that meets their goals and needs, and we work within their financial abilities,” said Dr. Dan Carrier, dentist and program manager at MCHD Dentistry.

Gov. Jim Justice created Jobs & Hope in 2019, said Marc Jackson, transition agent for Monongalia, Marion, Preston and Taylor counties for the program.

Jobs & Hope began as a way to help individuals with addiction issues transition into a productive life, Jackson said. “That was the original idea,” he added. “But then it was expanded to anyone who has barriers to employment, whether it’s transportation, childcare, substance use, past legal issues. You name it.”

The program partners with community and technical colleges as well as vocational schools in order to connect individuals who need employment with jobs. The heavy equipment operator course that Brandon took is run out of Camp Dawson in Kingwood.

“They feed them, house them, teach them how to operate four pieces of heavy equipment, and then they are sent back with a certificate,” Jackson said.

Jobs & Hope has also partnered with the West Virginia Oral Health Program, which provides the vouchers for dental work to members. This came in handy for Brandon, because years of going without dental care had left him with some issues.

“I was having pain, and the cavities were starting to mold and turn black on the base of my teeth,” he said. “My gums had gotten darker and I had yellowing of the teeth. Luckily, they were able to save all of my teeth.”

Julie Jackson, program manager for the West Virginia Oral Health Program, part of the state Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), noted that it made sense for the organization to take on this project with Jobs & Hope.

“The Oral Health Program was asked to administer the dental and vision sections as we have a successful pre-employment program and a relationship with many dental and vision providers throughout West Virginia,” Jackson said.

The one-time voucher comes from Jobs & Hope, she continued, and the individual must be enrolled in Jobs & Hope in order to take advantage of it.

MCHD Dentistry is the only full-service dental office within a county health department in West Virginia. MCHD Dentistry accepts a wide variety of payment options, including check, cash and credit card; CareCredit; sliding fee discount; new patient special; insurance; and Medicaid and CHIP.

Services include cleanings, exams, oral health education, oral cancer screenings, digital X-rays, dental sealants, mouth guards, simple extractions, root canals, bridges, crowns, implants, dentures and partials, custom bleaching trays, in-office bleaching, cosmetic bonding, porcelain veneers and Invisalign.

Brandon was also able to take advantage of additional benefits through Medicaid. Previously, Medicaid for dental work was only available for adults who required extractions. But starting in 2021, adults can take advantage of \$1,000 through Medicaid for dental work that includes cleanings, fillings and dentures, Carrier said.

“This is the first time since I have been practicing that there has been any benefit for adults with Medicaid other than extractions,” he added.

Brandon required several appointments, but even after not seeing a dental provider for several years, he got through it well.

“Dr. Carrier was sensitive to my situation,” he said. “I enjoyed the process. I’m not one of those patients who hates coming to the dentist. I value teeth. It was a fun process, especially with the group of people who worked with me.”

Monongalia County Health Department has been helping individuals with substance use disorder through the Monongalia County Quick Response Team (QRT).

The Monongalia County QRT is a collaboration among first responders, public health, peer recovery coaches (PRCs) and other health care and private partners dedicated to providing immediate and longer-term help to those struggling with substance abuse. Funded by grants

awarded to MCHD, the QRT meets weekly to discuss strategies for getting treatment and services to individuals who need it.

“This made incorporating the Jobs & Hope program’s dental voucher into MCHD Dentistry a logical fit,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer.

“Our work with the QRT has illustrated that individuals with addiction issues often need more help than just with counseling and rehab. Getting a job can be an important goal for some individuals in recovery, and good tooth health and a nice smile will help them achieve that.”

While Marc Jackson couldn’t comment on Brandon’s case, he was able to recall a story about another Jobs & Hope participant and how dental work helped her life.

“I was talking to a young woman, and the whole time, she had her hand over her mouth and her head down,” he said. Eventually, he noticed her smile and saw that she needed dental work, which she was able to get.

Later, “I saw her get interviewed on TV and she was grinning like a cheshire cat,” he said. “It was like two different people. I saw her get enrolled in college and moving forward in her life. Having that bad dental hygiene was something that was holding her down.”

For more information on the Governor’s Initiative program, Jobs & Hope WV, please visit the website <https://jobsandhope.wv.gov/>

For up-to-date information on health and wellness in Monongalia County, check out monchd.org and follow the health department on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd.