Neary county in Alabama through an urban and rural dental health care partnership will soon see a new care model aimed at making it easier for patients to avoid unnecessary tooth loss, and helping those who have experienced the loss of a tooth in the past to understand the dental procedures that might help them avoid future tooth loss.

Enterprise and Louisville metropolitan centers are joining together in a novel partnership that could help pave the way for improved oral health care in the county.

This year marks the beginning of a new 12-year partnership program known as the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP), a unique, week-long academic enrichment program, is sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. SMDEP offers college student exposure to underserved populations and increased opportunity to understand oral health care in underserved communities.

"The program taught me a lot about medical research, clinical and educational needs for underserved populations and more committed to practice in underserved communities because of its impact on oral health," said Trice after her summer experience. "I am planning to attend medical school in 2014.

Trice said she and many of her classmates experienced an urgent need for oral healthcare and access to care as a "silent epidemic." In response to that need, the National Research Council released a report recommending the establishment of the hope is that this will change people's attitudes about the value of dental care and make it more affordable for underserved populations and increased awareness to bring more low-income, rural and underserved populations into the educational pipeline.

Trice said her own life experience inspired her to become intimately familiar with dental care. Her mother worked and attended classes in her spare time to become a nurse, and the family moved to Arcadia Avenue for her education. The former North High student is the daughter of a retired dental hygienist who became a nurse.

"The hope is that this will change people's attitudes about the value of dental care and make it more affordable for underserved populations and increased awareness to bring more low-income, rural and underserved populations into the educational pipeline," Trice said. "The goal is to have more committed to practice in underserved communities because of its impact on oral health."

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