

University of Utah announces a transformational gift for oral patient care

Aug. 11, 2017

The University of Utah has announced a significant gift from the Ray and Tye Noorda Foundation for the new Tye Noorda Oral Health Services Endowment in the School of Dentistry. In honor of Tye, this new endowment advances the couple's vision for helping the most vulnerable within the community by providing Utah's underserved communities with access to oral health care services.

"Ray and Tye Noorda were visionary leaders in the formation of our school," said Rory Hume, associate vice president for academic affairs and education for University of Utah Health and dean of the School of Dentistry, which just this year graduated its first class of students. "From the outset, Tye's vision was for an academic center of excellence that also would provide vital and affordable care to the community—especially to those who otherwise could not afford it. This gift advances that cause in a significant manner."

The Tye Noorda Oral Health Services Endowment will be used to provide oral health care to those who don't have access to dental care and who fall through the cracks of society's current dental service structure—including patients who do not have dental insurance, do not qualify for Medicaid and cannot otherwise afford the full cost of dental care.

"For folks who lack access to dental care, the impact on their lives is more profound than we sometimes realize," said Brittany Erikson, the program officer at the Ray and Tye Noorda Foundation. "Lack of access to care can lead to nutritional deficiencies. A sore tooth can make it impossible for a child to pay attention in class, so they may fall behind. Sometimes, poor dental health may even lead employers to exclude hard-working individuals from employment opportunities. In this way, a lack of dental care can lead to a vicious cycle; those who are already underserved are excluded from even more opportunities. Tye Noorda believed that it shouldn't be that way."

Currently, patients who are treated by University of Utah dental providers receive roughly a 50 percent discount on oral health services. For many families, however, even these reduced costs can be a burden, placing oral care out of reach. This endowment will offer further subsidies, allowing the school's clinical providers to treat even more patients.

"Offering affordable oral care to the community has always been central to our mission," Hume said. "In our five years of operation, we have served thousands of patients at deeply discounted rates. Yet, we discovered that a number of families still couldn't afford our services. This gift helps us to ensure that they receive the right care, rather than be forced to choose the least expensive option."

When Tye and Ray were young newlyweds, they were on their way to dinner when Tye caught her heel on a rug and fell, knocking out her two front teeth, Hume said. Money was tight, so

Tye spent a year without those teeth—a year she hid her smile from others. The experience left an indelible mark on Tye and inspired her to create a place where individuals in need of support could gain access to affordable dental care.

In 2012, the foundation gave \$30 million to help launch the University of Utah's School of Dentistry by creating the Ray and Tye Noorda Oral Health Sciences Building, which also houses the student dental clinic, where services are primarily provided to uninsured individuals.

"Oral care is inextricably tied to overall health," said Hume. "We see a wide variety of people from nearly every walk of life. It's incredibly fulfilling to put them back on the road to health. As Tye wished—no one should have to hide their smile."

In just two and a half years, the School of Dentistry Student Dental Clinic has provided dental care to more than 7,000 unique patients and served hundreds more in community settings around the Salt Lake Valley.

"In keeping with the wishes of Tye Noorda to provide the underserved with better dental care," said Andy Noorda, "we're providing funds to the U's dental school endowment, in the hopes that the community will see the value of her wish and respond with their own generosity."

Ray Noorda is known as the "Father of Network Computing" and the late CEO of Novell Technology, where he led the company to great success, growing the number of employees from 17 to more than 12,000 during his tenure.

Ray and Tye believed that their good fortune should be used to help others, and those who knew them personally recall their generous hearts and unassuming dispositions. They committed themselves to helping people achieve health, purpose, and happiness, quietly making many generous donations to charitable organizations. Ray and Tye had no desire for recognition or fanfare; they simply wanted to provide others in their community with relief and opportunities.

In passing, Ray and Tye left their remaining wealth to the Ray and Tye Noorda Foundation's Charitable Trust. Now, with its founders in mind, the foundation's board and staff have committed themselves to helping people in Utah and beyond.

A testament to Ray and Tye's years of generosity, the Ray and Tye Noorda Foundation will be recognized at Utah Philanthropy Day on Nov. 16 as the recipient of the 2017 Foundation Spirit of Giving Award.

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