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CURE Scholars Inspired to Pursue Dentistry

February 26, 2020 | By [Jena Frick](#)

Free preventive dental care, a lesson in oral health, and a rap battle! That's what students in the [University of Maryland, Baltimore's \(UMB\) CURE Scholars Program](#) got to experience on Feb. 15 at the [University of Maryland School of Dentistry \(UMSOD\)](#). Students, faculty, staff, and alumni from UMSOD were there to welcome the middle and high school students to Oral Health Promotion Day, also known as Sealant Saturday.

The annual event provides an opportunity for the scholars and their families to learn more about dental health through hands-on activities. The scholars also received free preventative dental care from UMSOD dental hygiene students who performed oral exams and placed dental sealants on their teeth. These sealants will help prevent tooth decay for up to 15 years

(View a [photo gallery](#).)

"By placing these sealants and teaching the scholars how to take care of their teeth at home, we're preparing them for the rest of their lives," said **Kathleen Kohr**, a UMSOD Class of 2020 student and the dental hygiene class president. "We want to make sure they are brushing their teeth correctly and they're eating and drinking the right things so that they can take care of their bodies and their teeth for a long time."

This event is just one of many hands-on learning opportunities put on by the CURE Scholars Program, a nationally recognized pilot mentoring program funded by the [National Cancer Institute](#). Earlier this month, the scholars got the chance to practice using the da Vinci Surgical System, a robotic technology that's used to perform minimally invasive surgeries, at [University of Maryland Medical Center](#).

(View a [photo gallery](#).)



Earold Farquarson, a CURE Scholar in cohort 5 (right), works with his mentor, Courtney Kane, a Class of 2023 student at the School of Dentistry, to carve a tooth mold out of a soap bar.

Pawlak, DDS '19, who created the dental education program Planet Smilez; **Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD, MA**, dean of UMSOD; and **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, UMB's interim president. Jarrell had a special challenge for the scholars.

"Every place you go and every person you see today, I want you to picture yourselves in that position because the sky is the limit for you," he told the scholars. "You can be anything you want to be."

After the opening remarks, a group of the CURE Scholars went to have sealants put on their teeth by the dental hygiene students. Meanwhile, the rest of the scholars went with a group of dental students for a dentistry rap battle. They were split into teams, and each team picked out instrumental music. Using the music and what they learned from the dental students, the teams of scholars each wrote an original rap about dentistry and dental health.

(View a video below.)

The CURE program is aimed at reducing racial disparities in public health by introducing a pipeline toward careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to students in Southwest Baltimore. The program begins in sixth grade and continues through high school, college, and beyond.

"Through Oral Health Promotion Day, we're educating and building relationships with the scholars, so hopefully some of them are inspired to become a part of the dental profession when they grow up," Kohr said.

The day began with a presentation from Kohr about the basics of brushing and cavity prevention. The scholars also heard remarks from **Karen Faraone, DDS, MA**, UMSOD's associate dean of student affairs; **Kathryn**

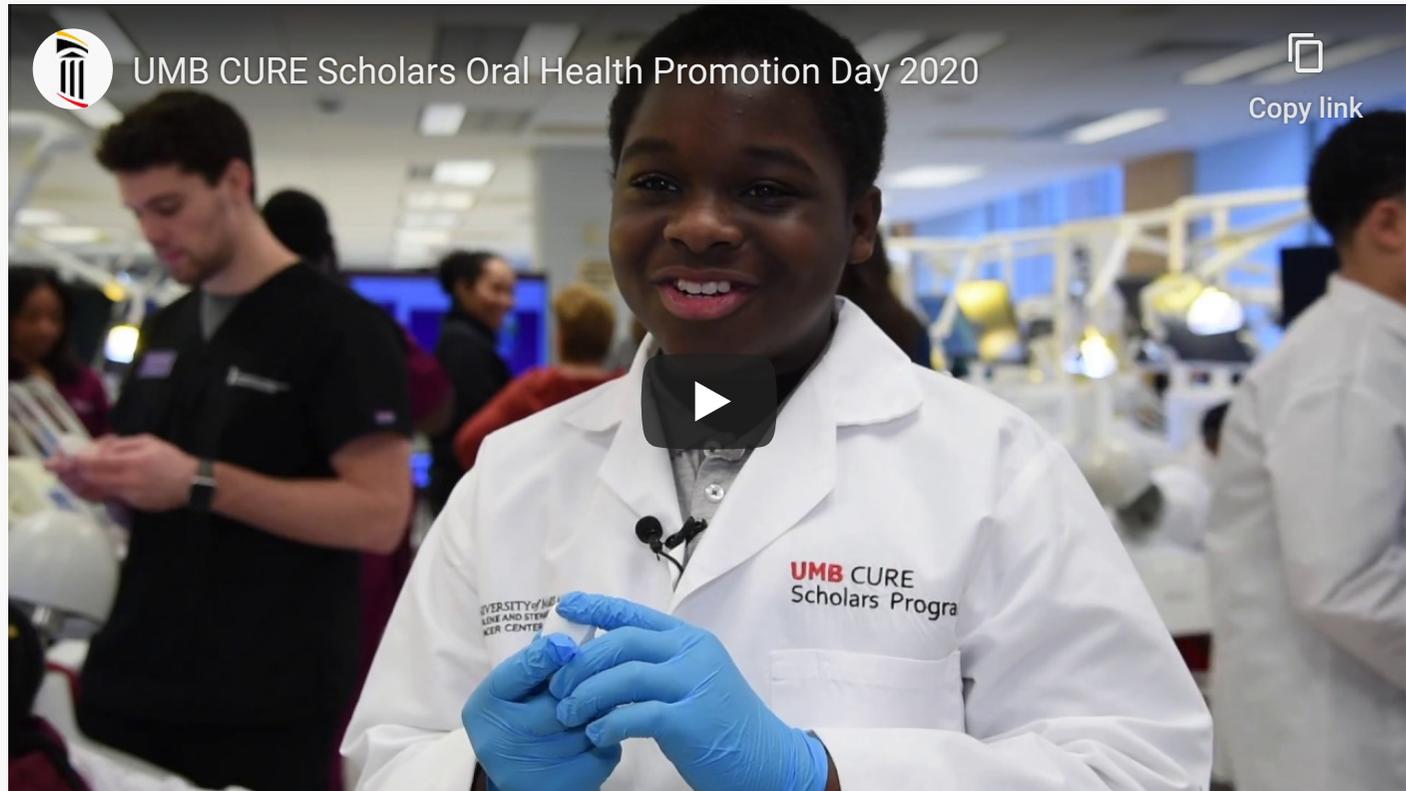
“It was really cool!” said Earold Farquharson, a CURE Scholar in cohort 5 and a sixth-grader at Green Street Academy. “We did a rap about a type of dentist putting in dentures, so we were learning from it while having fun.”

After competing in a rap battle, the dental students brought the CURE Scholars up to the dentistry labs, where they were able to participate in two activities using real dental tools. Under the mentorship of UMSOD students, the CURE Scholars carved a tooth mold out of a bar of soap and learned how to suture oral wounds by practicing on a hot dog.

“This is such a great opportunity for these kids,” said **Khadijah Kelly**, a Class of 2023 UMSOD student. “Having something like this as a middle school student is just so amazing, and it’s good exposure to show them that they could become dentists, too.”

That’s exactly what Earold took away from the experience.

“Using these tools was really cool,” he said. “When you’re a dentist, you get to help people live better, and you get to give them advice on how to take control of their health. I think I want to do this when I get older.”



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