



**FOR RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, NOV. 29 @ 8AM CST**

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**EARLY ADOPTER OF TELEDENTISTRY,  
APPLE TREE DENTAL IS RECOGNIZED FOR ITS INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS**

(MOUNDS VIEW, Minnesota; November 29, 2022) – Teledentistry isn’t a new concept, but it wasn’t widely employed until COVID-19 forced dental clinics across Minnesota to limit care to urgent cases only. While [Apple Tree Dental](#) has used the virtual dental care approach for more than 18 years ago working in collaboration with community sites, the pandemic prompted them to explore new and innovative ways to apply the modality. Now, the nonprofit dental organization’s groundbreaking approach has earned it peer recognition as [MouthWatch](#) -- a company that produces equipment used for teledentistry -- named Apple Tree Dental the 2022 recipient of its Teledentistry Innovation Award in the Dental Organization category.

The MouthWatch review panel noted it was “impressed by [Apple Tree’s] use of teledentistry and how it reveals the innovative change possible through virtual care.” The review panel also said, “We admire your mission to provide dental services to those that face barriers to receiving care, your commitment to innovation, and an outstanding team who can drive adoption.” The award was presented to Apple Tree Dental on November 28 at the Greater New York Dental Meeting in New York City.

To further its non-profit mission, Apple Tree developed two pilot projects to overcome barriers to optimum oral health and to expand access to dental care. The first project focused on the use of virtual appointments to triage urgent dental needs, allowing patients to be seen in a more timely manner and ensuring they are scheduled with the most appropriate provider for the patient’s dental need. This process allowed Apple Tree to increase the amount of care provided to patients, reduce the wait time for appointments, save valuable chair time for targeted treatment, and eliminate in-clinic visits for concerns that could be addressed virtually. Since the initial appointment was done remotely, using teledentistry made dental visits more accessible to patients – saving them time, money, missed work, and the need to arrange for childcare.

“I had a patient with a developmental disability who needed a surgery consult, so we scheduled a teledentistry appointment. His dad was so excited to save the two-hour drive to the clinic and the two-hour drive home,” said Jayne Cernohous, DDS, who has a special interest in serving geriatric patients and adults with disabilities.

The second project related to the use of teledentistry to optimize dental care for patients with pediatric patients. Due to lack of access to trained pediatric dentists, Apple Tree’s Pediatric Team receives a high number of referrals from general practice dentists, medical offices, and other pediatric dentists across the state of Minnesota. To make in-clinic appointments as efficient as possible, Apple Tree’s pediatric dental team is now first meeting with referred patients via teledentistry to gather more information

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**APPLE TREE DENTAL**

Access • Compassion • Excellence

## **Corporate Office**

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about the patient's dental needs and preferences. This approach increased the number of pediatric patients seen, reduced the wait time for appointments, and made in-clinic pediatric dental schedules more productive.

"Feedback has been so positive," said Apple Tree's Heather Luebben, an Advanced Dental Therapist who is part of the Pediatric Team. "We've now switched to having all first patient visits be conducted remotely. The technology allows patients to connect with a dental professional to determine if they need to make a trip into the clinic or if they can possibly manage their concern at home. It also helps keep patients out of the emergency room."

"We're proud of our Apple Tree Dental teams whose willingness to explore options with new technology and tools is significant. They continuously go above and beyond to break down barriers to care and provide quality dental services to so many patients," said Apple Tree CEO and co-founder, Michael Helgeson, DDS.

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### **WHAT IS TELEDENTISTRY**

Teledentistry is the use of information and telecommunication technology to offer remote dental care. Dental professionals use teledentistry to remotely provide consultations, examinations, and education, normally prior to having an in-clinic appointment. Teledentistry helps dentistry meet the challenge of greater efficiency, reach, and impact by connecting care providers at the point of care, be that patients' homes or community sites, such as long-term care facilities, schools, and Head Start programs.

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

Between July 2021 and June 2022, Apple Tree Dental provided more than 1,095 teledentistry meetings across the state. These numbers continue to grow as more community partners become equipped and are trained to collaborate with Apple Tree Dental on the teledentistry process.

### **About Apple Tree Dental**

*Founded in 1985, Apple Tree Dental's mission is to overcome barriers to oral health. Apple Tree provides comprehensive preventive care and dental treatment services at eight Centers for Dental Health throughout Minnesota to individuals and families, and also operates on-site care programs at 150 community partner locations for vulnerable communities using the industry's latest technologies. With special expertise in pediatric, geriatric and special needs populations, Apple Tree is nationally recognized for its pioneering approach to integrating dental care as part of overall health and wellbeing. For more information, visit [appletreedental.org](http://appletreedental.org).*