



## Francine Leach, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Francine truly goes above and beyond in all aspects of her life and career. “Do not do what is easy, do what is right.” This is one of her favourite quotations and it hangs in her office as a daily reminder that hard work, determination, and kindness can and will trickle down to her co-workers and most importantly her clients. Francine works in a truly amazing clinic that provides dental care to the most underserved populations, many of whom have never had dental treatment. She wants everyone who walks through her door to feel they belong and that they deserve high-quality education and treatment. She sees and treats the whole patient. Francine understands barriers to care and does everything in her power to “meet the client where they are.” She has quickly adapted to this role, becoming involved in the school breakfast program, going into the community to raise awareness of the clinic, and writing proposals for much-needed funding for the clinic, something she had not done previously but, as with everything, she put in the work and that hard work has paid off! I have yet to mention her role as a community clinic instructor at Dalhousie University. Although this is a new role for her, it is one she is so passionate about and the students who come to the north end clinic say it’s something they look forward to because of Francine’s professional nature, her wealth of knowledge, and kind demeanor. Francine is an active volunteer in her community and with the many activities that come with raising a young family. On top of this she is also completing her degree online. If this doesn’t define a superhero, I don’t know what does!

Francine Leach is absolutely a dental hygienist SUPERHERO. A couple of years back she decided to make a big life change and left a well-established private practice to join Halifax’s North End Community Health Centre. This is a not-for-profit health centre in an area of need that makes a BIG impact in our community. She also teaches classes at Dalhousie University’s School of Dental Hygiene, influencing the next generation of hygienists while balancing the needs of a young family. Francine is a delight to be around and is a consummate professional in the workplace. I’m proud to have been her client.



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# DO YOU KNOW A DENTAL HYGIENE SUPERHERO?



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Francine has an open and honest way of approaching life. The first significant experience I had with her was in her role as an educator with Waterpik. She came into my office with excitement and energy, willing to share her experiences and expertise. She is also a part-time instructor with Dalhousie University's School of Dental Hygiene and makes certain in her role as educator that everyone feels they are in an environment where they can express concerns and doubts without fear of reprisal.

The North End Community Health Centre (NEHC) provides treatment to a community with historically low access to health services. Francine was chosen to run the program and her goal was to increase access to care for both adults and children. What she is very proud of is the Children and Youth Dental Program (improving access to care for children who live in the North End). She goes to local schools, daycares, and the library to provide education and screening and to invite families to the dental clinic. She also does preschool assessments at the Newcomer Health Clinic (ISANS) and educational sessions at the ISANS school. Trust is a significant issue for patients seeking dental care. By implementing this program she is ensuring that the programs and services available are known and that misinformation spread through word of mouth is reduced.

Francine has the special ability to inspire others to learn more, care more, and to give a little more of their time and expertise to others in need.

Francine is awesome. Our 5-year-old daughter had a bike accident and did a little damage. We quickly got in touch with Francine, sent pictures and video, and she was awesome at calming our little girl down. She explained to us what we needed to do in the hours and days ahead, and she told our daughter what she needed to do. We followed directions and things turned out just fine! Saved me a visit from the Tooth Fairy too!!

Francine has always been focused on providing exceptional care to her clients, and over the past few years has continued to find ways to engage in and promote the profession. She currently holds four dental-related positions (Waterpik educator, North End Community Health Centre dental hygienist, North End Community Health Centre oral health navigator, and part-time dental hygiene faculty at Dalhousie University). She is very dedicated to the profession and, in particular, to advocating for increased access to care for vulnerable populations, especially children.

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Francine is always thinking ahead as to how to better serve the community and promote the practice of dental hygiene, whether it be by organizing volunteer days to perform primary screenings for our youngest and most vulnerable population, or organizing continuing education days for her colleagues. When Francine comes across a great technique or product, she is the first to share that information. I am so fortunate to have had her as a mentor. I have learned so much from her and we have spent many hours discussing dental hygiene. She is actually a big reason I became a hygienist myself. Francine is not one to toot her own horn, so to speak, so I am doing it for her! We are so fortunate to have such a passionate advocate for our profession, but more importantly, I am grateful to have such an amazing professional and personal role model in my life.

Francine has gone above and beyond in her duties. She goes out into the community to build trust with families and teach the importance of dental hygiene. She does regular visits to the local schools, daycares, library, and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to promote the clinic and provide education and supplies. She sees the most vulnerable clients in our clinic, providing not only dental hygiene care, but also referrals to supporting services to help with proper oral care, such as visits with our physicians or nutritionist, or support from our subsidized food programs. Francine works collaboratively with our entire team and is always looking for ways to promote dental hygiene to our patients and clients, including putting information and toothbrush kits together for nurses to distribute at their well baby appointments, and volunteering at the school breakfast program. In her role at the NECHC, Francine works closely with our volunteer dentists, dental students, and faculty from Dalhousie University, and is the faculty clinical instructor for the dental hygiene students from Dalhousie University when they are rotating through our clinic. She is active with the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia and the Halifax Dental Hygiene Society and supports initiatives to lobby provincial government to improve access and use of the Children's Oral Health program. Recently she has been working with Dalhousie University to deliver a program to provide access to dental care for adults in need, in partnership with the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia and Green Shield Canada. She is always promoting the importance of oral hygiene and collaborative care, which often catches the attention of donors, funders, volunteers, and the media. Francine is more than deserving of this award!



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Francine goes above and beyond every single day to make sure that our patients are looked after. Our clinic operates on grants and funding, there is never a cost here for our patients, and Francine is the backbone of making sure it's possible. She applies for grants, organizes volunteer days, and is a constant support to the rest of the team. Just last month she organized a hygiene day for children in the community by having three hygienists volunteer; we were able to see 21 children. No matter what is going on here or in her personal life she greets everyone with a smile and you always feel welcome. She's doing amazing work with children (and adults) here in the North End of Halifax and I can't think of anyone more deserving of recognition!

Francine is kind and confident in her role. She has always gone above and beyond to answer all my dental-related questions. Full of knowledge, Francine has given my family and me helpful advice to maintain great dental hygiene.

When I first met Francine, she stood out right away with her exceptional approach to dental health care. She always has a fantastic rapport with her patients and goes above and beyond for both their health care and their clinic experience!