

MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Summer 2010](#) » [Alumni Profiles](#) » Fixing smiles

Alumni Profile

Fixing smiles

The next time you're sitting in a dentist's chair staring up at the ceiling while someone goes to work on your teeth, consider yourself fortunate. Many have no dental care at all. But Jessica Monroe, BA '08, aims to change that.

Monroe, now a dental student at the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Dentistry, will spend at least three years after graduation serving low-income and rural patients across Missouri.

"I've volunteered at a community clinic and have seen people drive two hours for a dental exam," Monroe says. She hated having to turn some of them away because the clinic was full. "They would say, 'Well what am I supposed to do now?' And I can't stand not to have an answer for them."

That kind of thinking is characteristic of Monroe. She's a problem-solver. "If someone has a toothache, I want to fix that toothache," she says.

Dental school tacks four years of education onto a bachelor's degree, but Monroe won't pay a dime. She received the ultra-competitive 2009 Delta Difference Dental Student Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to one student each year and covers tuition, books and living expenses.

During her undergraduate career at Mizzou, Monroe participated in the Exposure to Research for Science Students (EXPRESS) program. The program is designed to get minority students involved in scientific research.

Kathleen Newton, an EXPRESS mentor and professor of biological science, was a first-hand



Scholarship recipient Jessica Monroe, BA '08, will soon provide dental care to underprivileged patients across Missouri.

witness to Monroe's smile. "There's a joyousness you can see in her that people really respond to," Newton says.

Soon to be armed with a dental degree, Monroe will be off to get underprivileged Missourians flashing their smiles once again. —*David Wietlispach*

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