Media Alert for planning purposes: Photo and sound bite opportunities

Local events highlight disadvantaged children’s need for dental care

West Allis, Wis., Jan. 31, 2011 – More than 5,150 low-income Wisconsin children are expected to receive some $740,000 in donated dental care this Friday, Feb. 4, and during upcoming weeks, as part of the ninth annual Give Kids A Smile® children’s dental access day.

GKAS activities will occur statewide in private dental practices and large-scale dental clinics. At least 360 Wisconsin dentists, along with 950-plus dental team members, dental, hygiene and assisting students, faculty and community advocates will volunteer their time and skills to get underserved children out of pain and treat dental disease with fillings, extractions and crowns. Other GKAS events will involve dental professionals visiting schools and community centers to conduct screenings and provide oral hygiene education.

“It’s heartbreaking to see a child’s smile destroyed by severe tooth decay,” said Wisconsin Dental Association President Dr. Eugene Shoemaker, a general dentist in Waukesha, Wis. “Children can’t eat, sleep or pay attention in school when they have a toothache. Charity events like GKAS aren’t the ultimate answer to making sure every Wisconsin resident has access to oral health care, but our dental professionals are glad to donate their time and skills to this very worthy cause.”

The WDA and member dentists work with the state’s Department of Health Services, local government agencies, public schools, Head Start and local youth and community organizations to identify low-income children with the greatest need for dental treatment.

Cavities are a chronic disease and five times more common than asthma among our nation’s children according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ “Healthy People 2010” report. A Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ report notes 25 percent of the state’s Head Start children ages 3 and 4 have untreated decay and 33 percent have had cavities and now have fillings.

“Primary or baby teeth are very important to a child’s early physical, social and emotional development,” Shoemaker said. “Healthy baby teeth foster good nutrition through proper chewing, aid in speech development, build self-esteem by providing a beautiful smile, enable a child to pay attention and learn in school without the distraction of dental pain and save space in the jaw that is needed for proper development of permanent, adult teeth. Programs like GKAS help us get care to children who don’t have access to regular dental care.”

GKAS 2011 will be marked nationwide by 12,010 dentists joining with 33,115 other volunteers to provide
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care to 391,695 low-income children at 1,727 events.

These activities are supported with significant corporate donations from Colgate-Palmolive, Henry Schein Dental and DEXIS® Digital X-ray. WDA Insurance & Services Corporation offers pediatric dental forms to Wisconsin GKAS events through The Dental Record under its Professional Services Division.

In Wisconsin, $4.1 million in charitable dental care has been provided to 29,250 low-income children since 2003, when the WDA joined with the American Dental Association in launching GKAS during February’s National Children’s Dental Health Month.

GKAS is just one example of how Wisconsin dentists serve their communities and make a difference for underserved residents of all ages through charitable care in their private practices and by volunteering at community dental clinics, the WDA Mission of Mercy and other outreach programs explains Shoemaker.

“Dentists are doctors of oral health. We have the training and education to relieve pain and make people well — but we can't solve the state's dental crisis alone,” he said. “The WDA believes barriers to dental care can be reduced when policymakers and dentists work together on positive, viable ‘Healthy Choices’ for all state residents – children and adults. Ensuring residents have good oral health saves patients from dental pain and infection and is economically and socially important to our state.”

The 27-county WDA Northwest Region will feature GKAS events in several communities this Friday. Any activities scheduled for other dates or with available patient slots are specifically noted.

**Abbotsford** – Drs. Christina and Troy Rens and their dental clinic team will again provide free dental exams and sealants to an estimated 100 second graders enrolled in Abbotsford and Colby public schools. A Clark County public health nurse will present dental health information and schedule follow-up care for children as needed. Dental goody bags are made available with the support of the Abbotsford Lions Club.

**Amery** – Dental Arts’ four dentists and staff will welcome 65 children, preschool through sixth grade, from the local elementary school on **Saturday, Feb. 5** for necessary preventive and restorative services. A special display about acid’s effects on teeth will help educate parents and youngsters.

**Antigo** – Some 50 youngsters will get their teeth examined and cleaned and receive preventive and restorative care thanks to the father-daughter dental team of Drs. Timothy and Meghan O’Brien and their staff.

**Chetek** – Dr. William Shea and his Midwest Dental team will provide preventive and restorative care to 24 children ages 5 - 12.

**Eau Claire** – Ten dentists are expected to work with 35 Chippewa Valley Technical College dental hygiene and assisting students to provide preventive and restorative care and dental education to 120 children.

In addition, four dentists and 18 staff at Midwest Dental’s Oakwood and South offices have scheduled appointments for 19 underprivileged children to receive needed oral health care.

**Hudson** – Dr. Julie Lesher and her Dentistry on the Vine team will provide preventive and restorative care to 20 children between the ages of 3 and 18. Those diagnosed with dental disease are scheduled for follow-up care. Children and parents are provided with a healthy snack or lunch during which the importance of diet to dental and overall health is discussed.
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Drs. Ryan Tietz and Douglas Weiher, with the help of their Oakwood and New Richmond Dental teams, will provide oral hygiene education along with preventive and restorative services to 20 children.

**Hurley** – Dr. Paul Hagemann and six staff are working with the Iron County Health Department, Hurley School District and Head Start to provide dental screenings and fluoride varnish to 50 area students. The care is provided on three days during the school year including GKAS Friday.

**Menomonie** – Dr. Gregory Green and his Lakeside Dental team will welcome 24 children ages 3 to 15 who have limited access to dental care. Oral health education, preventive screening and necessary treatment will be provided.

The Midwest Dental office on Wolske Bay Road has appointments to screen and provide basic preventive services to 18 youngsters ages 3 – 15.

**Minocqua** – Two dentists and 20 other dental and community volunteers will provide 1,000 children in area schools and Head Start programs with free dental screenings, fluoride varnish applications and oral health education as part of the Northwoods Dental Project Healthy Smiles.

**Neillsville** – The new Clark County SEALS Program involves one dentist and five volunteer dental staff providing 280 low-income second, third and sixth graders at three area schools with sealants and fluoride varnish.

**New Richmond** – Ten children ages 5 - 15 will receive basic preventive treatments and necessary restorative care at Dr. Luke Foster’s Midwest Dental office.

**River Falls** – The four-person Midwest Dental team will provide oral hygiene education, teeth cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants to 15 young people.

**Spring Valley** – Dr. Dan Connors’ Spring Valley Dentistry will open its doors to 10 elementary and middle school students for much-needed care. The young patients will also learn about good oral hygiene.

**Stevens Point** – Dr. Michael Schmidt and four Midwest Dental team members will provide 10 youngsters with preventive treatment and necessary restorative care.

**Superior** – Sixteen children, ages 4 – 18, will visit Dr. Neal O’Shaughnessy, Jr.’s Tower Avenue practice for basic dental care.

**Tomahawk** – Dr. Dean Hussong and his practice team will celebrate GKAS on **Feb. 15**. The staff is working with local organizations to identify children in urgent need of dental care.

**Wausau** – Cherry Tree Dental will be a busy place on Friday with four dentists and 13 support staff tending to the oral health needs of 20 youngsters.

Drs. Jeremy Hoffman and Caroline May and their Midwest Dental team will provide 20 children with teeth cleanings, sealants and fluoride treatment.

**Weston** – Dr. Christy Gajewski and three Midwest Dental clinic staff will instruct eight local children in good oral hygiene while providing them with needed preventive and restorative dental care.

**Wisconsin Rapids** – Dr. William Sheker and his three Midwest Dental staffers will provide six youngsters with treatments to help prevent cavities and address any existing dental infections.
The Wisconsin Dental Association was established in 1870. With more than 2,900 members statewide, the WDA represents 83 percent of all licensed, practicing dentists in Wisconsin. WDA members are committed to promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care. The WDA is headquartered in West Allis and has a legislative office in Madison. It is one of 53 constituent (state-territorial) dental societies of the American Dental Association - the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. The Northwest Region serves the counties of Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Pierce, Polk, Portage, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Taylor, Vilas, Washburn and Wood. For more information on the WDA, call 414-276-4520, visit our WDA.org website or find us on Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Editor's Note: Due to the need for signed parental permission and other documentation, most GKAS events can only see children who are registered in advance, in most cases through schools and social service clubs and agencies. Please do not indicate to the public that the event is open to unregistered children unless specified in an above event description. Thank you.