



Greater Milwaukee Dental Association
6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2360, West Allis, WI 53214

CONTACT: Carol S. Weber, APR, Director of Public Relations
PHONE: 414-755-4108 (direct)
E-MAIL: cweber@wda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PHOTO & SOUND BITE OPPORTUNITIES!

Wisconsin dentists donating \$719,000 in care to 6,250 children for Give Kids A Smile®

WEST ALLIS, WIS., Feb. 2, 2010 – An estimated 350 Wisconsin dentists will volunteer their time and skills, along with 934 dental team members, dental, hygiene and assisting students, faculty and community advocates, to donate more than \$719,000 in oral health care and education to 6,253 of the state's low-income children **this Friday, Feb. 5** and during upcoming weeks as part of the eighth annual [Give Kids A Smile®](#) children's dental access program.

Statewide, \$3.4 million has been provided in charitable dental care to 23,000 low-income children since 2003 when the [Wisconsin Dental Association](#) joined with the [American Dental Association](#) in launching GKAS during February's [National Children's Dental Health Month](#).

GKAS 2010 will be marked nationwide by 12,780 dentists joining with 36,490 other volunteers to provide care to 322,885 children at 1,983 events. These outreach projects vary from large-scale dental clinics delivering exams, cleanings and fluoride treatments to individual dentists providing fillings, extractions and crowns to underserved children in their private practices to dental professionals offering screenings and educational programs in various locations.

In Wisconsin, the WDA and member dentists work with the [state's Department of Health Services](#), local government agencies, public schools, Head Start, Boys & Girls Clubs and other youth and community organizations to identify low-income children with the greatest need for dental treatment.

GKAS activities are supported by significant corporate donations from Colgate-Palmolive Company, DEXIS® Digital X-ray and Henry Schein Dental. WDA Professional Services Division's The Dental Record makes children's dental record forms available to Wisconsin GKAS events.

In the Milwaukee area, GKAS is celebrated with a large-scale, cooperative effort between the Greater Milwaukee Dental Association, Marquette University School of Dentistry, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Clinic (formerly Madre Angela Dental Clinic), Children's Hospital Pediatric Dental Clinic, Milwaukee Area Technical College dental hygiene program and numerous private dental offices. Holt Dental Supply, Patterson Dental Company, Henry Schein and Colgate are providing additional support and materials.

On Jan. 23, some 175 volunteers welcomed 658 children to MUSOD where they received dental exams, had their teeth cleaned and fluoride varnish applied. Parents were provided with oral health education. The

DENTISTS DONATING CARE TO NEEDY KIDS FOR EIGHTH YEAR – 2

value of services delivered just on the GKAS screening day was \$89,187.

Dozens of dentists and support staff working in dental clinics and private offices throughout the Milwaukee area will deliver follow-up treatment to approximately 300 children on Feb. 5 and subsequent days.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease affecting American children – five times more common than asthma. The [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#) reports 80 percent of tooth decay is found in just 25 percent of children, the majority of whom are in low-income families.

Moderate tooth decay during childhood restricts physical development, decreases the ability to learn and requires frequent emergency room visits and hospitalization. In some cases, untreated oral disease has been linked to more catastrophic illness, such as an abscess that led to a 12-year-old Maryland boy's death in 2007.

The WDA, ADA and [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#) recommend children be examined by a dentist within six months of the eruption of the first tooth and no later than age 1.

According to a February 2005 [Children's Dental Health Project](#) report, low-income children who have their first dental exam by age 1 are less likely to visit emergency rooms for oral health problems or require restorative care. In addition, 5-year-olds who had their first dental visit at age 1 have incurred oral health-related costs at a rate about one-half that of their peers who don't see a dentist until age 5.

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (physicians) calls for 20 percent of all health care funds spent on children to be directed at improving and maintaining their oral health.

In Wisconsin, about 1 million low-income children and adults, or 20 percent of state residents, are beneficiaries of Medicaid, BadgerCare and BadgerCare Plus programs at some point during a given year. State fee-for-service data for fiscal year 2006 (most recent available) shows that while medical assistance patients received \$74 million in dental care, the state and federal governments paid just \$32 million or 44 percent of those charges. This means dentists donated the remaining \$42 million in care to MA patients or more than the Wisconsin and U.S. governments combined paid for.

"GKAS and nonreimbursed MA care are just two examples of how [Wisconsin dentists do serve](#) their communities and make a difference for underserved children and adults through charitable care in their private practices and by volunteering at [community dental clinics](#), the [WDA Mission of Mercy](#) and other outreach programs," explains [WDA President Dr. Kent Vandehaar](#) of Chippewa Falls, Wis.

"However, charity alone is not a sufficient oral health care delivery system," Vandehaar points out. "Low-income patients suffer for various reasons: failure to care for their own oral health; inability to find a dental office for routine care, because small businesses can't absorb too much income loss; and, lawmakers' failure to sufficiently fund the dental care they have promised."

Despite access-to-care concerns for the underserved and medical assistance population, the [Kaiser Family Foundation "State Health Facts" Web site](#) shows 73.2 percent of Wisconsin residents had their teeth cleaned by a dental professional in 2008 compared to 71.3 percent nationally.

A [March 2009 USA Today article](#) ranks Wisconsin seventh in the nation in percentage of residents who have seen a dentist in the last 12 months.

DENTISTS DONATING CARE TO NEEDY KIDS FOR EIGHTH YEAR – 3

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 Greater Milwaukee Dental Association serves Milwaukee County. For more information on the WDA, call 414-276-4520, visit our WDA.org Web site and find us on [Facebook](#)

- end -

February is National Children's Dental Health Month