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Wisconsin dentists to donate more than \$763,000 in care to 5,433 poor children for Give Kids A Smile sixth anniversary

WEST ALLIS, WIS., Jan. 25, 2008 – Some 318 Wisconsin dentists, with help from 760 dental hygienists and assistants, dental and hygiene students and their instructors and community volunteers, will donate an estimated \$763,350 in oral health care and education to 5,433 of the state's low-income children Friday, Feb. 1 and during upcoming weeks in recognition of the sixth annual Give Kids A Smile national children's dental access day.

Wisconsin GKAS events have provided some \$2.1 million in donated dental care to 12,500 low-income children since the program was introduced.

The Wisconsin Dental Association and member dentists work with the state's Department of Health and Family 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. Please note Wisconsin GKAS events generally are not open to the public.

Nationwide, the American Dental Association expects an estimated 51,000 dental professionals will provide free services to more than 500,000 children at 2,000 sites as part of GKAS 2008. Events range from large-scale dental clinics providing free fillings, cleanings and fluoride treatments to groups of dentists delivering restorative care to underserved children in their private practices to individual dentists offering screenings and educational programs in various locations.

GKAS, a centerpiece of February's National Children's Dental Health Month, was initiated in 2003 by the ADA and state and local dental societies to combat what the U.S. Surgeon General called "a silent epidemic" of dental disease and to encourage parents, health professionals, policy-makers and everyone who cares about children to address this important health issue.

"We appreciate the efforts of those legislators working to improve dental access for low-income patients with a financial investment by state and federal governments. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the state in implementing a long-term, viable solution that takes advantage of the more than 2,000 private dental practices across Wisconsin already 'open for business'," says WDA President Dr. Monica Hebl of Milwaukee.

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GKAS 2008 activities are supported by significant corporate donations from the Colgate-Palmolive Company, DEXIS Digital X-ray and Henry Schein Dental. The Dental Record – A Division of WDA Professional Services Inc. also is making children's dental record forms available to Wisconsin GKAS events.

The 16-county WDA Northeast Region will feature GKAS events in the following communities (activities scheduled for Feb. 1 unless otherwise noted):

- **Appleton** – Drs. Jane Mathen and James Springborn and their Fox Valley Dental Associates team are again working with a local public school to identify six low-income children in need of comprehensive care.
 - Dr. Patricia McConnell's Artistic Smiles Dentistry, a newcomer to GKAS, will provide basic preventive and restorative care to 20 youngsters.
 - Dr. Roger Stanek and his eight-person staff are working with Appleton school nurses and the Big Brothers & Big Sisters Program to deliver needed dental care to 20 children.
 - Working with Appleton and **Sheboygan** grade schools, Drs. Peter Hehli and Randy Valenta will welcome 25 children into their offices. Fifteen support staff will assist with the initial preventive and restorative treatment. Children needing more comprehensive treatment will receive follow-up appointments.
 - Tri-County Community Dental Clinic (TCCDC) is coordinating in-clinic and in-dental office care for 80 children, ranging in age from four to 17 years, from Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago counties. Volunteers include 16 dentists and several dozen dental team members. Fox Valley Technical College hygiene and assisting students will also be involved.
- **Chilton** – Dr. Mariah Murphy and six staff plan to provide preventive and restorative dental care to some 30 low-income children.
- **Fond du Lac** – Ten Fond du Lac County Dental Society members and their dental teams are working with the county health department to provide 88 needy children with dental exams, cleanings, X-rays and fillings and extractions as needed on GKAS day. Three other dentists are already scheduled to volunteer their time and professional services in March and April.
- **Green Bay** – Dr. Heidi Eggers-Ulve and staff celebrate GKAS on Feb. 1 and throughout the year by providing dental exams, necessary follow-up care and oral hygiene classroom presentations to an estimated 350 Head Start children in the Green Bay School District.
 - Drs. Chris Hansen and Daniel Tache, a University Dental colleague and five support staff will help 35 children receive important basic dental care and education.
 - Dr. Martin Williams and his Sierra Dental team will welcome six children to their Riverview Drive office on **Feb. 8** for dental treatment.
- **Manitowoc** – The Dental Park team will provide exams, preventive services and restorative care to 35 low-income children.
 - Smile Clinic dentists and staff worked with Manitowoc County Health Department and the

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local Head Start program to identify 30 children ages two to 12 needing oral health services.

- Drs. Jessica Hall and Sandra Piefer-Tomczak and six support staff will donate exams, cleanings and necessary restorative treatment to 20 children referred by the local Head Start program and county health department. Care is provided year long.
- **Menasha** – Dr. Michael Wockenfus and the Mid-Valley Dental team are focusing on preventive services for their GKAS contribution this year.
- **Neenah** – Drs. Dawn, Tim and Tip Brown and Brown Family Dentistry staff will provide exams, cleanings, restorative care and fluoride treatments to 10 children.
- **Oconto Falls** – Dr. Debra Munes and her three-person team will welcome 20 Oconto County low-income children to the office for exams, cleanings and restorative dental services.
- **Plymouth** – The Joseph & Joseph Dental practice is gearing up to provide oral hygiene education, exams, cleanings, dental sealants and fluoride treatment to 100 preschoolers and kindergarteners.
- **Sheboygan** – Dr. Linda Bryce and staff will offer basic dental services to 15 area youngsters.
 - Sheboygan County Dental Society, including the pediatric dentists at Just Kids Dental, is teaming up with Lakeshore Technical College to treat 70 youngsters referred through the local Salvation Army and Head Start programs.
- **Sturgeon Bay** – Open Door Dental Clinic dentists and staff are cooperating with Door County Memorial Hospital, Door County Social Services & Health Department and the Hispanic Resource Center to provide basic preventive and restorative care to needy children.
- Dr. Jeff Moos, president and CEO, reports Midwest Dental offices in **Plymouth** and **Sheboygan** will provide a variety of dental services in those communities as part of a \$70,000 system-wide GKAS effort reaching about 210 children.

The U.S. Surgeon General recognizes oral health as an integral part of a person's total health, with the dentist being the primary oral health care provider and reports tooth decay is the most common chronic disease affecting American children, five times more common than asthma. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows tooth decay is on the rise among preschoolers, reversing a half-century of progress.

Untreated oral disease has been linked to childhood infections and more catastrophic illnesses such as the abscess that led to the death of a 12-year-old Maryland boy, Deamonte Driver in 2007. More commonly, moderate tooth decay restricts children's daily activities and results in the loss of many millions of hours of classroom time each year.

The ADA recommends children see a dentist within six months of their first tooth erupting or by age one. However, studies reveal only three out of five children have done so by the time they enter kindergarten. This inattention and other barriers to oral care, means that for the first time in 20 years an increasing number (52 percent) of children ages six to eight have tooth decay according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in its Healthy People 2010 oral health update.

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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. However, Wisconsin and federal governments together spend only about \$38 million, *or less than one percent*, of the total \$4.4 billion annual state Medicaid budget on dental programs for adults *and* children. Four out of every five states spend a higher percentage of MA dollars on dental care for residents of all ages than Wisconsin, according to ADA data.

“Volunteer data collection shows individual WDA dentists donate, on average, \$10,000 - \$12,000 worth of care each year through their private practices, in addition to the free services they provide through GKAS, MA, Donated Dental Services, community clinics and other charitable programs. But charitable care cannot fulfill the oral health care needs of the estimated 864,000 people who seek dental treatment through the state’s MA program annually,” emphasizes Hebl.

Established in 1870, the WDA is headquartered in West Allis. With more than 2,900 members statewide, the WDA represents the vast majority of practicing dentists in Wisconsin. Members are committed to promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care. For more information call 414-276-4520 or visit www.wda.org.

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February is National Children’s Dental Health Month