



## 2012 – Give Kids A Smile® Talking Points

### **Local Give Kids A Smile® events highlight disadvantaged children's need for dental care.**

- More than 5,650 low-income Wisconsin children will receive an estimated \$945,000 in donated dental care on Friday, Feb. 3 and during upcoming weeks, as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Give Kids A Smile® children's dental access program.
- At least 475 Wisconsin dentists, along with 540-plus dental team members, dental, hygiene and assisting students, faculty and community advocates are volunteering their time and skills to get underserved children out of pain and treat dental disease with fillings, extractions and crowns.
- Since 2003, Wisconsin GKAS® events have delivered \$5 million in free dental care to 34,281 youth.

### **The American Dental Association and Wisconsin Dental Association launched the Give Kids A Smile® children's dental access program in February 2003 during National Children's Dental Health Month to:**

- Help children get the dental care they so desperately need.
- Highlight for public officials, media and general public the ongoing challenges disadvantaged families face in finding dental care.

### **Oral health is critical to overall well-being.**

- Tooth decay is a serious and transmissible disease that can spread quickly and lead to infection without proper precautions.
- Early childhood cavities, which are preventable, are four times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever among America's children.
- Studies show poor oral health may be linked to other health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, pre-term childbirth and oral cancer.
- Ensuring residents have good oral health saves patients from dental pain and infection and is economically and socially important to our state.

### **Baby teeth matter to a child's early physical, social and emotional development, because they:**

- Foster good nutrition through proper chewing.
- Aid in speech development.
- Build self-esteem by providing a beautiful smile.
- Help children pay attention and learn in school. (More than 51 million school hours are missed annually due to dental problems.)
- Save space in the jaw needed for proper development of adult (permanent) teeth.

### **The WDA recommends everyone have a dental home where comprehensive oral health care is provided in a continuously accessible, coordinated and family-centered way by a doctor of oral health.**

- Dental disease is most effectively diagnosed and treated by a licensed dentist assisted by a qualified dental staff.
- Good personal daily oral hygiene (brush, floss and healthy diet), fluoride, sealants, routine professional dental exams and early restorative care help prevent dental disease and pain, while reducing demand for more advanced and expensive treatment.
- The WDA, ADA and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommend children have a dental exam within six months of the eruption of the first tooth and no later than age 1.
- Lawmakers and dentists working together on positive, viable "Healthy Choices" can reduce barriers to dental care.

### **WDA dentists serve their communities and make a difference by providing charitable dental care to children and adults throughout the year, but charity is not a sufficient oral health care delivery system.**