

CDA Update

More than 13,000 California kids receive dental care

By: Emily Ireland



Dr. Sahar Jaffrey, left, of Walnut Creek, and Tiona Smith, RDA, work on a child in Contra Costa. Jaffrey headed her component's Give Kids a Smile effort. (Photo courtesy of Contra Costa Dental Society)



Herman George, RDA, with Davon, one of the children helped by the annual Give Kids a Smile event. (Photo courtesy of Contra Costa Dental Society)



The Hispanic Dental Association of Los Angeles delivered care in the dental office of Irubiel Barbosa, DDS, with the aid of a private mobile dental clinic supplied by Dr, Wilmer Yaban. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Jaime Hernandez)



Dr. David Morris and Dr. Kathleen Lim, pediatric dentists in Fremont, participate in their local dental society efforts. (Photo courtesy of Southern Alameda County Dental Society)



2006 Give Kids a Smile

Number of kids seen: 13,399

Total volunteers: 1,598

CDA volunteers: 475

Value of services: \$747,452

Numbers based on reports from 22 dental societies throughout California and the Hispanic Dental Association of Los Angeles.

Each year, the Give Kids a Smile campaign allows California dentists to draw attention not only to the spirit of goodwill, but also to the serious oral health problems facing nearly two-thirds of the state's children. Once again, California's dental community surpassed expectations by contributing time, money and care to thousands of young residents.

The 2006 Give Kids a Smile campaign was a success nationwide with more than 500,000 children across the country receiving dental care and education and more than 12,000 dentists participating. According to ADA, there were approximately 2,000 events nationwide. Component societies throughout the state all participated in various ways, and nearly \$675,000 worth of dental care was delivered to the children of California.

The Contra Costa Dental Society put forth a significant effort this year, with 67 volunteers, 13 of whom are CDA member dentists, providing treatment on one day in early February to more than 300 children. The dental society's event was held in private dental offices and elementary schools.

Sahar Jaffrey, DDS, chair of the Contra Costa Dental Society Awareness Committee, was in charge of coordinating the Give Kids a Smile event in Contra Costa. Recognizing the importance of participating and raising

awareness, she worked with a local nurse to contact membership and sign up volunteers. She said finding enough volunteers was the most challenging aspect of the project, since there are always many children in need of care.

The children treated were typical of most children seen throughout the country during Give Kids a Smile. Primarily low-income, most had parents and caregivers who were unaware of the importance of proper oral health habits. Some of the children in Contra Costa had been seen by the volunteers previously, but could not afford the additional care; so the volunteers called them back on the event day to provide the necessary treatments at no charge.

Volunteers in Contra Costa provided a variety of treatments to children in the area. Some were given extractions, some were taken to the hospital for severe caries; most needed a lot of work, and not all could be done in one day. In these cases, kids were treated and then placed with local offices for follow-up care throughout the year. A very few had good oral health habits, needing only cleanings, sealants, varnishes or instructions. Jaffrey suggested that this was most likely due to a better start early in life, good pediatric care, educated parents, or a family history that exposed them to the importance of proper oral health care.

“If we accomplish raising awareness in the community about oral health, hopefully we can also get politicians interested,” Jaffrey said, “especially after seeing the numbers. This is both a statewide and nationwide public policy issue; and it is important that we address it, and not just at the local level.”

Across Northern and Southern California, the effort was equal; the Sacramento District and Northern California dental societies alone delivered more than \$300,000 worth of care. The Southern Alameda County Dental Society also provided excellent care this year to children, both in local elementary schools and at the Safe Alternative to Violent Environment Shelter. With support of donations from Sullivan-Schein and California Dental Services, as well as entertainment from Pockets the Clown, face painting and balloon animals, Southern Alameda was able to treat children in a fun and comforting atmosphere.

In Southern California, the Hispanic Dental Association of Los Angeles worked to provide care to local children on March 3. The event was held at the dental office of Irubiel Barbosa, DDS, with the aid of a private mobile dental clinic supplied by Wilmer Yaban, DDS, and 16 staff. Jaime Hernandez, DDS, president of the association, headed the effort, which treated local Hispanic, low-income children who have no access to medical care. As in Contra Costa, the children suffer from a lack of preventive dental work and education, and few good oral health habits.

“Preventive health education is very important; we should be going to schools and giving presentations.” Hernandez said. “The goals of our association are to provide better oral health for the Hispanic community, to get education to the Hispanic community, get dentists reachable, and hopefully get mobile units in the area and get the residents more attention.”

Dr. Hernandez has noticed that the location of traditional dentists is not proportionate with the need for oral health care. He also discovered a critical need for more volunteers and involvement from other ethnic dental societies when putting together an event such as Give Kids a Smile.

“We notice the need for more dental ethnic societies to get involved in these activities due to the lack of capacity to provide more dental services to marginalized communities,” Hernandez said.

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