



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 03-30-09

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Health Department and area dentists give kids a smile

Stanton~ It is almost inconceivable for most adults to imagine not being able to eat, sleep or concentrate because of a toothache, and yet it is something nearly one in four children age two to eleven years-of-age deal with each and every day right here in Montcalm County.

Evidence of this dental disparity was obtained through school-based dental screenings conducted during the 2000-2001 school year. Results indicated a high number of children with untreated cavities and only a small number of children with sealants (a thin plastic film “painted” on the chewing surfaces of molars that act as a barrier to decay).

These findings prompted Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) and a group of local dentists to launch the Montcalm Area School-Based Dental Screening and Molar Sealant Project, which targets second and sixth grade students. Currently, all second and sixth grade students with parental consent are eligible to participate in the dental screening and sealant program.

Last year 272 children in Montcalm County received dental screenings and 132 received dental sealants as part of the program. Since the 2002-2003 school year, the program has provided screenings and 2,151 molar sealants free-of-charge to 616 children attending schools in Montcalm County. It is expected that over 700 sealants will have been applied to Montcalm County students when this year’s project concludes April 30, 2009.

The program, which also assists in enrolling eligible children in Medicaid or the Adopt-A-Child’s-Smile Fund to aid in paying for dental care, would not have been possible over the years without the generous support of the Central Montcalm Community Foundation, Greenville Area Community Foundation, Meijer Children’s Health Care Fund and West Michigan Dental Foundation.

Dr. Lance Bartz, a dentist with MMDHDs Stanton Dental Care Center, speaks to why the Montcalm Dental Sealant Program is so vital to the community. “It’s heartbreaking to see a child’s smile destroyed by severe tooth decay,” he said. “Some children have reached the point where the only alternative is a mouthful of crowns or pulling teeth that can’t be saved. It’s tragic. Statistics clearly show that untreated dental problems are not only painful but affect a child’s physical, emotional and social development as well.”

Carol Hanba, MMDHD Oral Health Coordinator also shares a similar view of the program, “It is so rewarding to see the positive impact that this wonderful program has on our youth,” she said. “It’s a fantastic feeling to know that I help give kids a smile.”

Participating dentists include Dr. Lance Bartz of Stanton, Dr. David Dockham of Stanton, Dr. Terry Donohue of Carson City, Dr. James Draper of Lakeview, Dr. Keith Faber of Greenville, Dr. Ammar Houssein of Stanton, Dr. Michael Malley of Greenville, Dr. John Marshall of Sheridan, Dr. Christopher Morgan of Edmore, Dr. John O’Donald of Greenville, Dr. Robert Saukas of Stanton, Dr. Scott Wemmer of Howard City, and Dr. Bill Winget of Lakeview.

If you have any questions regarding the Montcalm School-Based Dental Screening and Molar Sealant Project, please contact Carol Hanba, MMDHD Oral Health Coordinator at 989-831-3621.

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Dr. Bill Winget of Lakeview Dental Associates examines a child at Bright Start Elementary School in Lakeview



Dr. Terry Donohue of Carson City's Donohue & Donohue examines a child at Carson City Elementary.