



# NEWS RELEASE

## **AREA DENTAL PROFESSIONALS ADDRESS ACCESS TO CARE WITH FREE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN**

*Low income children benefit from annual Give Kids A Smile! events*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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FOR INFORMATION:  
**Kristin Herring, DDS**  
**828-267-6858**  
**Cynthia W Sigmon, RDH NC Oral Health**  
**828-695-5868**

(Catawba County) --- Dentists and other volunteers in **Catawba County** are teaming up with hundreds of their peers in North Carolina and throughout the nation for “Give Kids a Smile!” day. This is all part of the American Dental Association’s (ADA) sixth annual Give Kids A Smile program. The program offers educational materials, oral health screenings and free dental treatment to children in need. Examples of dental services provided include cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, and fillings.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease affecting American children, five times more common than asthma according to a report by the U.S. Surgeon General. Recent CDC data shows that tooth decay is on the rise among US preschoolers, reversing a half century of progress in reducing dental disease. Untreated oral disease has been linked to childhood infections and more catastrophic illnesses, such as the untreated abscess that took the life of a 12-year-old Maryland boy, Deamonte Driver, in 2007. More commonly, tooth decay greatly restricts children’s daily activities and results in the loss of many millions of hours of classroom time each year.

“Dental care remains a critical unmet health care need among America’s children,” said Mark J. Feldman, D.M.D., president of the American Dental Association. “The ADA and dentists across the

nation are engaged in creating public awareness of this critical need and trying to extend access to dental care to more low-income children. To this end, we are celebrating with our sixth annual Give Kids A Smile program, to help put children on the road to a lifetime of good oral health.”

The ADA launched its national Give Kids A Smile program to combat what the U.S. Surgeon General called “a silent epidemic” of dental disease and to encourage parents, health professionals, policymakers and everyone who cares about children to address this important health issue.

In Catawba County, dental professionals will open their doors throughout the month of February to treat low-income children for free. All children participating have been pre-screened and selected on the basis of need. Dental education will be provided to over 6000 children, and it is anticipated that over 325 children will receive free restorative or preventive dental health services. This notable local effort is being accomplished through the leadership of the North Carolina Dental Society (NCDS) and the efforts of thousands of volunteers. In addition to the NCDS, it takes a number of organizations to make the event a success. These organizations include the North Carolina Oral Health Section, the North Carolina Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, SmartStart (North Carolina Partnership for Children), the UNC School of Dentistry, North Carolina Community Colleges, the North Carolina Dental Assistants, as well as cooperative sponsors Colgate-Palmolive and Henry Schein Dental.

Local dentists and their staffs from Catawba County that have volunteered include: Dr. Tom Carnaggio, Dr. George Clay, Dr. Ashley Collins, Dr. Michael Cordora, Dr. C. P. Dunbar, Dr. Lena Eldridge, Dr. David Gaddis, Dr. Bryan Graham, Dr. Coke Gunter, Dr. Darryl Hatchett, Dr. Mark Helton, Dr. Kristin Herring, Dr. Gary Jones, Dr. Kimberly Jones, Dr. Ron Key, Dr. William Litaker, Dr. Raymond Pate, Dr. Chris Reese, Dr. Robert Rights, Dr. Jason Sain, Dr. Jerry Sowers Jr., Dr. Richard Troutman, and Dr. Zac Yoder.

The ADA recommends that every child see a dentist no later than his or her first birthday. However, studies reveal that only three out of five children have had a dental exam by the time they enter kindergarten. Because of inattention and other barriers to oral care, more than half (52%) 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.

The ADA strongly supports several bills before Congress to help improve access to oral health care, including the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007 and H.R. 2371, known as “Deamonte’s Law,” named for the Maryland child who died of an untreated dental abscess. The ADA

urges parents to take control of their families' oral health by ensuring that children brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, floss daily, eat a balanced diet and see a dentist regularly.

“This event, which has been months in the planning, has been enthusiastically embraced by our local dental community and school systems,” said Cindy W. Sigmon, Public Health Dental Hygienist for the NC Oral Health Section serving Catawba County. “I anticipate that \$100,000 in free dental care will be awarded this year to children from Catawba County through this Give Kids A Smile program.”

For more information on “Give Kids a Smile!” contact Cindy W Sigmon at 828-695-5868 or Dr. Kristin Herring at 828-267-6858 or visit [www.ncdental.org](http://www.ncdental.org) or [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).