



Delta Dental of Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Delta Dental of Minnesota Continues Expanding Program to Iron Range
School-Based Dental Program Targets Elementary School and Head Start Children

Hibbing, Minn. (March 29, 2010) – Delta Dental of Minnesota announced an additional \$15,000 grant to Children’s Dental Services to help expand Smiles Across Minnesota, a statewide preventive dental program, to the Iron Range. To date, Delta Dental of Minnesota has invested \$125,000 to help establish the program in Chisholm, Hibbing, Mesabi East, Virginia, the International Falls region and Duluth.

The program will continue to help improve the oral health of underinsured and uninsured children. It does this by providing children ages three to 12 with preventive dental services – including cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants – right within the schools at no cost to the schools.

“We know there is a real need for more access to oral health resources in the Iron Range communities,” said Ann Johnson, Director of Community Affairs, Delta Dental of Minnesota. “We also know that when we invest in children receiving basic preventive care, it’s an important first step in creating a lifetime of improved oral health.”

“We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Children’s Dental Services and Delta Dental of Minnesota to successfully serve our community with this program,” said Shelley Valentini, Executive Director, United Way of Northeastern Minnesota. “Delta Dental’s substantial commitment to support the success of this important program to the Iron Range has been critical. Over 50 percent of our children are eligible to receive these services. Children need to be able to attend school at their healthiest to increase their potential for learning.”

Dental services will be offered to all students at participating schools and administered by a local hygienist from Children’s Dental Services. “Community-based programs such as Smiles Across Minnesota are very cost-effective ways to ensure that children without strong access or insurance receive oral health education and critical preventive care such as sealants and fluoride treatments,” explained Sarah Wovcha, executive director of Children’s Dental Services. “Children receiving dental sealants in school-based programs have 60 percent less tooth decay for up to five years.”

Children’s Dental Services will provide care for children on public assistance. Uninsured students who are income-eligible will receive free care through the program, paid for by charitable corporate and foundation contributions. If a family already has commercial insurance, those children and their parents will be encouraged to visit their previously established dental home. If they do not have a primary dentist, children will be referred either to a local dentist or the family will be assisted in finding appropriate services. All children receiving care will need parental consent.

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“We are pleased to partner with two outstanding Minnesota organizations that are deeply committed to improving the health of underserved children— United Way of Northeastern Minnesota and Children’s Dental Services,” said Delta Dental’s Johnson. “It’s all about our mission to improve the oral health for all Minnesotans.”

Since the program’s launch, Delta Dental of Minnesota has donated over \$300,000 in support of Smiles Across Minnesota, which has expanded to include St. Cloud, Rochester, Duluth, Mankato, the Iron Range and the Twin Cities.

***About Delta Dental of Minnesota** – An independent, non-profit health services company, we take seriously our mission to serve Minnesotans’ oral health needs. Since 1969, we’ve accomplished this mission by providing the best access across the state to oral health care through affordable dental plans. Delta Dental of Minnesota is based in Eagan, Minnesota. Delta Dental is a registered mark of Delta Dental Plans Association. Delta Dental of Minnesota is an independent nonprofit dental services company and is an authorized licensee of the Delta Dental Plans Association of Oak Brook, Illinois.*

***About Children’s Dental Services** – CDS is an independent, non-profit that has provided dental services to children since 1919. CDS is the only Minnesota agency dedicated exclusively to providing oral health outreach, education, preventive and restorative treatment to children. During its history CDS pioneered two major concepts for making affordable dental care accessible to children: 1) CDS was the first dental program in the nation to provide on-site dental care to Head Start children; and 2) CDS provides full on-site mobile preventive and restorative care to children in schools and community based settings. CDS provides dental care to children, birth to age 21, and pregnant women. CDS offers a sliding fee scale under which reduced-cost or free care is provided. CDS employs staff who collectively speak 22 different languages, making them well equipped to serve bilingual or multilingual families.*

***About United Way of Northeastern Minnesota** – The United Way of Northeastern Minnesota's has been in existence since 1966 covering five counties serving the needs of individuals and families. Their mission is to unite and focus local communities in creating measurable results to improve people’s lives and strengthen families. More than just a fundraising organization UWNEMN works on assessing needs with the goal of creating long lasting changes with a focus on education, health and financial stability. For additional information go to www.unitedwaynemn.org.*

***About Smiles Across Minnesota** – Smiles Across Minnesota is a statewide initiative of Oral Health America’s Smiles Across America program. Oral Health America is a national oral health advocacy organization whose mission is to increase public awareness of oral health's importance to total health. Oral Health America established the Smiles Across America program in 2004 to provide preventive dental care to uninsured children in school-based settings.*

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