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TOOTH FAIRY GIFTS CONTINUE CLIMB, AVERAGE UP 20 CENTS

Survey Indicates 2004-05 Gifts Range from 10 Cents to \$25

(EAGAN, MINN.) February 28, 2005 — Minnesota children have reason to cheer as the nation's economy rebounds from recession – the Tooth Fairy is now paying more for teeth. According to a Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota survey of more than 400 parents, the average “gift” a young child's tooth receives went up by 20 cents to \$1.78 from \$1.58 last year — an increase of 12.5 percent.

“The increase in the Tooth Fairy's payment was significant compared to some of the increases in the stock market indices over the past year,” said Marty Weiland, research analyst at Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. “However, it was interesting to note that ‘gifts’ ranged from a low of 10 cents to a high of \$25 this year.”

The Dow Jones Industrial Average and NASDAQ have enjoyed an increase as well, although considerably smaller than their winged counterpart. The Dow and NASDAQ indices have increased 1.98% and 1.72% , respectively, over this period. The average tooth fairy gift increased just four cents last year, from \$1.54 to \$1.58, and payment slid 3.75 percent, to \$1.54 from \$1.60, in 2002-03.

According to the survey, which is conducted as part of **Children's Dental Health Month** in February, a child's first visit to the dentist took place on average between 2-4 years of age. Additionally, 88 percent of parents surveyed reported that at least one of their children had fluoride treatments and 68 percent reported that their children had sealants.

“The American Dental Association currently recommends that you schedule a visit to your dentist by your child's first birthday,” said Dr. Dick Hastreiter (DDS), vice president and Dental Director at Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. “This will give your child an opportunity to become familiar with the dentist and a chance for the provider to evaluate their needs.”

According to the *Textbook of Pediatrics*, tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease, affecting 5-8 times as many children as asthma. Additionally, children

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suffering from dental problems lose an estimated 52 million school hours annually, according to the *American Journal of Public Health*.

“The Tooth Fairy is a rite of passage and provides an ideal opportunity for parents to instill good oral health habits in their kids,” said Hastreiter. “By providing proper instruction, monitoring, encouragement and a positive personal example, parents and caregivers can help children develop and maintain a healthy attitude about the importance of oral health. By having regular dental checkups, getting sealants if needed, flossing and brushing with fluoride toothpaste, drinking fluoridated water, and eating a balanced diet, children can learn to attain and maintain good oral health for a lifetime.”

Other activities to mark **Children’s Dental Health Month** included the unveiling of the Tooth Book, an oral health education guide funded by Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota with a \$150,000 grant and created by the Minnesota Head Start Association. The Tooth Book will reach more than 45,000 Head Start families, and 115,000 children across the state.

In addition, Delta Dental provided an oral health educational session at a Head Start classroom in Duluth and, in partnership with Twin Cities-based nonprofit, Children’s Dental Services, provided more than 700 free dental screenings at the Mall of America’s Toddler Tuesday program and the Children’s Expo.

Observation of children’s dental health began as a one-day event in 1941. In 1981, the event was extended to a month-long celebration, known today as National Children’s Dental Health Month. For more oral health tips check out the Delta Dental Web site at www.deltadentalmn.org.

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An innovator in oral health benefit plans, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota is an independently operated, nonprofit dental services company that administers self-insured and prepaid dental service plans. Delta Dental serves more than 8,600 employer groups with more than 2.8 million members in Minnesota and across the nation. Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota is headquartered in Eagan, and has a customer service center on Minnesota’s Iron Range. For more information, visit our Web site at www.deltadentalmn.org.