

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:**

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**Delta Dental of Minnesota Provides \$10,000 Grant to Rochester's
Smiles Across Minnesota Program**
School-Based Dental Program Targets Elementary School and Head Start Children

ROCHESTER, Minn. (November 19, 2009) – Delta Dental of Minnesota has provided \$10,000 to Children's Dental Health Services to help improve the oral health of low-income and uninsured children in Rochester, Austin and surrounding area school districts. The donation is given on behalf of Smiles Across Minnesota, a statewide preventive dental program. The purpose of the program is to reach uninsured and underserved who are at high risk for tooth decay, have serious dental needs and experience challenges in accessing dental care. Smiles Across Minnesota offers preventive dental services including cleanings, fluoride treatments and dental sealants in school- and community-based settings.

"We are excited to expand our support of Smiles Across Minnesota to serve the children of Southeastern Minnesota," said Ann Johnson, director of community affairs at Delta Dental of Minnesota and co-chair of Smiles Across Minnesota. "Tooth decay affects more children than any other chronic disease and because it can be painful if left untreated, it can affect their ability to concentrate and learn. School and community focused programs are cost-efficient and effective in reducing barriers and dental disease. Children who receive dental sealants in school-based programs have 60 percent less decay for up to five years."

"We are thrilled with Delta Dental of Minnesota's financial support," says Kristine Billman, director of Children's Dental Health Services. "The funding helps us provide needed dental services for eligible Southeastern Minnesota children. We hope that it will also encourage other local funders to step forward and support our mission. We expect to see a real difference in the dental health of many young children."

All children receiving care will need parental consent. Along with dental services, children receive education on brushing, flossing and good nutritional practices, which can help reduce long-term health care costs and improve overall health. Dental services will be administered at participating schools by one of three local hygienists from Children's Dental Health Services.

***About Delta Dental of Minnesota** – Delta Dental of Minnesota's oral health initiatives are part of its non-profit mission to provide educational information and support community programs that help enhance the oral health of all Minnesotans. 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 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 Health Services (CDHS)** – CDHS is a nonprofit organization founded in 2005 to serve the dental needs of low-income and underserved children 14 years old and younger who do not have a dental home. Using a portable delivery system, CDHS brings its program to schools, community centers like Head Start, and public health facilities throughout southeastern Minnesota. In addition, CDHS provides oral hygiene and nutritional education to children, parents and guardians.*

***About Oral Health America** – 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. Companies who support the national program include Trident Cares for Kids, Delta Dental of Minnesota, 3M ESPE Dental Products, Patterson Foundation, GC America, Aetna Dental, and Dentsply, among others.*