



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Children's Dental Services Contact:

Sarah Wovcha, swovcha@msn.com
Mobile: 612-636-1577 • Office: 612-746-1530 x204

Delta Dental of Minnesota Contact:

Heather Hofmeister, hhofmeister@deltadentalmn.org
Office: 651-994-5210 • Mobile: 612-202-9159

Smiles Across Minnesota Expands Program to St. Cloud

School-Based Dental Program Targets Elementary School Children

ST. CLOUD, Minn. (March 23, 2009) – Smiles Across Minnesota expands its statewide preventive dental program to St. Cloud Area School District 742 public elementary schools on March 25. The program will help improve the oral health of low-income and uninsured children. Smiles Across Minnesota provides children ages three to 12 with preventive dental services – including cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants – right within the schools.

“When Children’s Dental Services and Delta Dental of Minnesota brought the Smiles Across Minnesota program to us, we realized it fit the exact need of this community and ensures children in St. Cloud public schools have their oral health needs met,” said Dr. Steve Jordahl, superintendent of St. Cloud Area School District 742. “Smiles Across Minnesota allows us to serve a large number of students who may not have access to regular preventive dental care.”

Dental services will be offered to all students at participating schools and administered by a local hygienist from Children’s Dental Services. “Preventive measures, such as education, sealants and fluoride treatments, have a long-term impact on a child’s future dental health and well-being,” explains Sarah Wovcha, executive director of Children’s Dental Services and co-chair of Smiles Across Minnesota.

“Community based programs are cost-effective. Children receiving dental sealants in school-based programs have 60 percent less decay for up to five years. This program provides an additional tool that supports good oral health for students who are most in need. We anticipate serving 1,000 children in the first year, at a minimum,” said Wovcha.

The program is for uninsured and underinsured children. 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. 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 contributions. All children receiving care will need parental consent.

“We are excited to bring this successful, national school-based program to St. Cloud,” said Ann Johnson, director of community affairs at Delta Dental of Minnesota and co-chair of Smiles Across Minnesota. “Our goal was to create a model that can be tailored to fit the community’s specific needs. We are thrilled that St. Cloud Area School District and several of the surrounding school districts are interested in starting this program.”

(more)

Smiles Across Minnesota Kicks Off in St. Cloud...Page 2

“Smiles Across Minnesota is the standard for how all Smiles Across America programs should operate,” said Beth Truett, President and CEO of Oral Health America. “Smiles Across Minnesota is successfully expanding its model throughout Minnesota – identifying needs and eliminating barriers to care and education.”

Smiles Across Minnesota – St. Cloud is a joint effort made possible by St. Cloud Area School District 742 and Children’s Dental Services. Delta Dental of Minnesota has provided financial support to successfully launch Smiles Across Minnesota – St. Cloud.

About Smiles Across Minnesota – Delta Dental of Minnesota and Children’s Dental Services launched the Smiles Across Minnesota coalition in 2006, in conjunction with Oral Health America’s Smiles Across America program. Smiles Across Minnesota is one of the most successful coalitions of Oral Health America’s Smiles Across America program, which focuses on providing school-based dental care to low income and uninsured children.

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. Companies who support the national program include Oral Health America, Trident/Cadbury, 3M ESPE, Delta Dental of Minnesota, Patterson Foundation, GC America, University Bank, Aetna Dental, Sunstar Butler, Dentsply, and DNTLworks among others.

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 serves more members from Minnesota-based groups (3.4 million members from 8,400 employer groups) than any other dental benefits provider. Delta Dental of Minnesota is based in Eagan, and has an operations center (customer service, claims processing, and broker and small group sales and account management) on the Iron Range. For more information, visit www.deltadentalmn.org. 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.

###