



Delta Dental of Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Delta Dental of Minnesota's Smiles Across Minnesota Coalition Partners with *Invest St. Paul* to Expand Sealant Program

June 27, 2007 (EAGAN, Minn.) – Delta Dental of Minnesota (Delta Dental) today announced a partnership with St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and the *Invest St. Paul* initiative, to expand its children's oral health efforts. Delta Dental will leverage its recently formed Smiles Across Minnesota (SAM) Coalition, which focuses on providing school based dental care to low income and uninsured children, to offer a dental sealant program in designated *Invest St. Paul* areas.

"We are pleased to partner with Mayor Coleman to help improve the oral health of St. Paul children," said Ann Johnson, director of community affairs at Delta Dental of Minnesota and co-chair of the SAM Coalition. "Sealants help prevent tooth decay, which remains the number one unmet childhood disease. Untreated tooth decay can affect a child's health, well-being, growth, and achievement."

The recent release of the Center for Disease Control report "Trends in Oral Health Status: United States" indicates tooth decay can begin at an early age. The percentage of children ages two to five who have had at least one cavity in their baby teeth was 28 percent in 1999-2004, up from 24 percent in 1988-1994. Eighty percent of the disease is expressed in 25 percent of the children, typically low income and uninsured children.

"Preschoolers may be susceptible to more decay because they are drinking more soda and fruit juice drinks and less milk and water with fluoride," said Johnson. "The good news is that tooth decay is almost entirely preventable and therefore we must focus on effective solutions, such as sealants, to prevent the diseases."

The sealant program will be offered through Children's Dental Services, a nonprofit that provides dental care for children in need and a co-founder of the SAM Coalition.

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“We’ve been working with Children’s Dental Services on several oral health initiatives including the Smiles Across Minnesota program,” continued Johnson. “The Invest St. Paul partnership will help expand the program even further. We are working to spread this model throughout Minnesota. Discussions are underway for expansion in the Duluth and Rochester communities as well.”

Community Event

On Thursday, June 28 there will be a community and press event to announce the collaboration between Smiles Across Minnesota and St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman's Invest St. Paul initiative that will be provide dental sealants to all children in the Invest St. Paul areas. This effort will expand into other community settings such as parks and recreation and libraries in order to reach children who are out of school during the summer.

Children's Dental Services will be providing dental screenings and care between 1:00-4:30 at the Rice Street Library. Remarks begin at 1:30 p.m. Several partners will be attending, including St. Paul’s Mayor Coleman. Sue Dodd, program director from Oral Health America will be present as well as representatives from Delta Dental, 3M ESPE, Children’s Dental Services and the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

Smiles Across Minnesota – Delta Dental of Minnesota and Children’s Dental Services launched the **Smiles Across Minnesota (SAM)** 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. The Smiles Across Minnesota coalition includes leadership and support from several Minnesota organizations including Delta Dental of Minnesota, Children’s Dental Services, 3M ESPE, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Park Dental and University Bank.

Dr. Sheila Riggs, president and CEO, Delta Dental of Minnesota and Lauren Segal, president and CEO of Greater Twin Cities United Way are the Smiles Across Minnesota honorary co-chairs. Sarah Wovcha, executive director, Children's Dental Services and Ann Johnson, director of community affairs at Delta Dental of Minnesota, serve as the co-chairs. In addition, Delta Dental of Minnesota and Greater Twin Cities United Way have provided significant local funding and 3M ESPE is donating thousands of sealants to make the program a success.

Children’s Dental Services (CDS) is a nonprofit corporation that provides dental care for children whose families cannot pay for dental care, and for children with insurance. CDS provides dental care to more than 12,000 children per year, and screening and follow-up to more than 11,000 school age children. In addition to providing comprehensive dental service at 18 locations in the Twin Cities Metro area, CDS hosts an internship program, an oral health screening program, a teledentistry program, and various outreach programs.

In 2006 **Delta Dental of Minnesota** contributed approximately \$700,000 in grant and donations to support a range of programs addressing oral health and community needs. An innovator in oral health benefit plans, Delta Dental of Minnesota is an independently operated, nonprofit health services company that administers self-insured and prepaid dental service plans. Delta Dental serves more than 8,300 employer groups with more than 3.2 million members in Minnesota and across the nation. Delta Dental of Minnesota is headquartered in Eagan, and has a customer service center on Minnesota’s Iron Range. Since 1969, our mission has been to serve Minnesotans’ oral health needs by providing affordable and accessible dental benefit plans that help maintain and improve oral health. For more information about Delta Dental of Minnesota, visit www.deltadentalmn.org.

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