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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Dentists treat local children during Give Kids a Smile Day**

*Event highlights unmet dental needs of Michigan kids*

LANSING, Mich. – More than 1,500 local children throughout Michigan will receive free dental treatment in private dental offices, dental schools, and community health centers as part of “Give Kids a Smile” day.

The eighth-annual “Give Kids a Smile” day is an American Dental Association initiative to provide free oral health care to at-risk children and to raise awareness of the number of children with unmet dental needs. During this nationwide event, thousands of dentists and other dental volunteers across the county provide free dental services to low-income and uninsured children.

These events serve as a wake-up call to the governor and legislators to properly fund basic oral health services for all Michigan children,” said William Wright, D.D.S., M.S., president of the Michigan Dental Association. “This one-day effort obviously isn’t going to solve the problem, but it highlights the growing needs of these children and the need for policy makers to respond with more comprehensive dental-access programs.

“This is not a problem that can be fixed solely by dental professionals,” Wright said. “Policymakers must consider the ramifications when people are forced to go without needed treatment. Not only do people suffer, but the ultimate cost of treating them – in hospital emergency rooms and with expensive restorative care – goes up. It just makes good fiscal sense to treat people in a timely, effective fashion.”

More than 350 Michigan dentists will participate in Give Kids a Smile events across the state on Friday, providing services ranging from complete treatment to screening to fluoride treatment and placing sealants, to teaching children how to hold a toothbrush properly.

Access to oral health care is a problem in Michigan, where nearly 10 percent of third-graders have immediate dental care needs with signs or symptoms of pain, infection or swelling, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health. One in four Michigan third-graders has untreated cavities.

“I worry about the thousands of children who need dental care who don’t receive care – the ones who continue to have trouble eating, sleeping and paying attention in class because their teeth are in such bad shape.” said Wright. “We need to make good oral health a priority for all children.”

Supporters of “Give Kids a Smile!” include: American Dental Association, Michigan Dental Association, Colgate, Henry Schein Dental, DEXIS Digital X-ray, Michigan Association of United Ways, Head Start Association, Boys & Girls Clubs and local dental societies.

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