



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION
FEBRUARY 25, 2005
Contact: Sharney McLaughlin (619) 409-3252
Cell (619) 301-7306

SOUTH BAY CHILDREN HAVE SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT *Free Dental Sealants and Fluoride Varnish to be Provided to Kids with No Dental Resources*

In celebration of "National Children's Dental Health Month," the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), along with the San Diego County Dental Society, offer a free dental clinic from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26 in National City.

The event, to take place at the Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program, 880 National City Blvd., National City, will provide dental sealants and fluoride varnish to low-income children (ages 1 to 18 years) with no dental resources. The event supports the "Something to Smile About" program initiated by San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price.

Tooth decay is the most common infectious disease among children, accounting for more than 51 million school hours lost annually in the nation.

"Tooth decay is epidemic among children," said Greg Cox, District One, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "We need to take action now to attack this growing problem, and this clinic is a great example of how public/private partnerships can come together to improve children's health."

"These sealant and varnish clinics give families access to dental care for their children and promote the prevention of dental disease," said Peggy Yamagata, R.D.H., M.Ed., with the County's Dental Health Initiative/Share the Care.

Many children do not receive routine dental care and prevention services because they do not have a regular dentist. A recent study of children (grades two through five) in the South Bay found that 30 percent had untreated cavities and 74 percent had active gum disease.

More than 60 volunteers, including numerous dental professionals, will provide free screenings, preventive care, and education to children and families. The event is a collaboration of HHSA (Dental Health Initiative/ Share the Care, and Central and South Regions), the San Diego County Dental Society, the San Diego County Dental Hygienists' Society, the San Diego County Office of Education, Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program, Mesa Community College, and UCSD.

###