



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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FREE DENTAL CLINIC KEEPS SOUTH COUNTY KIDS SMILING

Dental Sealants, Fluoride Varnish Provided to Uninsured Children Through County Partnership

Hundreds of children were left smiling this morning as First District Supervisor Greg Cox and the County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) South Region offered a free dental clinic at the Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program in National City. The clinic held in celebration of National Dental Hygiene Month provided dental sealants and fluoride varnish to low-income children (ages 1 to 18 years) with no dental insurance.

Tooth decay is the most common infectious disease among children, accounting for more than 51 million school hours lost annually in the nation. Dental disease is five times more prevalent than asthma and seven times more prevalent than hay fever. 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 South San Diego County found that 30 percent had untreated cavities and 74 percent had active gum disease.

"All school-age children should enter school ready to learn without suffering. Sadly, every day, there are kids who can't concentrate in school because of pain from an untreated mouth or gum infection," said Supervisor Greg Cox. "These sealant clinics provide a great opportunity to prevent untreated oral disease and make dental services available to many families who would otherwise go without."

"We are pleased to see so many parents taking this opportunity to improve the health of their children," said Peggy Yamagata, R.D.H., M.Ed., with the County's Dental Health Initiative/Share the Care.

More than 60 volunteers, including numerous dental professionals, provided free screenings, preventive care, and education to children and families. This free clinic was funded by the County Board of Supervisors at the recommendation of Supervisor Greg Cox and supports the "Something to Smile About" program initiated by Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price. The collaborative effort was also supported by the County HHSA South Region, Share the Care-The Dental Health Initiative of San Diego, the San Diego County Dental Society, the San Diego County Dental Hygiene Association, the San Diego County Office of Education, Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program, Mesa Community College, and UCSD.

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