

# Governor Signs Proclamation Declaring February Children's Dental Health Month

Des Moines, Iowa – February 11, 2011 – Dentists from across the state gathered today at the Iowa State Capitol as Gov. Terry Branstad signed a proclamation declaring February Children's Dental Health Month.

"While this is part of a national initiative, it is important that we recognize at the state level the importance of dental health for all Iowans but, especially our youngest citizens," said Dr. William Strohman, president of the Iowa Dental Association. "We appreciate Gov. Branstad signing this proclamation recognizing the work our dentists are doing to educate children about good oral healthcare. We cannot forget they are also providing special programs and services reaching children whose families don't have dental insurance or the ability to pay for services."

As part of Children's Dental Health Month, many Iowa dentists are participating in Give Kids A Smile® day, which is a day set aside to assist children from low-income families. Dentists may choose to participate in a number of ways, such as the following examples.

- On Friday, February 11, Dr. Jessica Lawson of Lawson Family Dentistry in Urbandale will visit daycare centers across the metro talking to children about the importance of teeth brushing and establishing healthy dietary habits early on.
- The three dentists at Van Hofwegen & Munter Family Dentistry in Spencer will see between 40-50 low-income children ages preschool – 18 on February 18 to provide free exams and cleanings. If needed, dentists will also provide extractions and restorative work free of charge. The practice has worked with the school system to provide similar services to children in need the past several years.
- For more than a decade, Dr. Heather Heddens has participated in Give Kids A Smile day. Her office works closely with the school district and the Washington County Public Health Department to identify students who either don't have dental insurance or the ability to pay for services. While the focus is on cleanings, Dr. Heddens will provide extractions and restorative care free of charge as needed during a March 22 event.

Give Kids a Smile and National Children's Dental Health Month are just the most recent examples of how Iowa dentists give back to their respective communities by providing programs and services designed to increase access to care, as well as educate about the importance of oral health care.

Other programs include Donated Dental Services (DDS), which is a program to assist disabled or elderly people who cannot afford comprehensive dental treatment and have no other financial assistance. Through the Iowa Donated Dental Services program, Iowa dentists provided 621 elderly and persons with disabilities more than \$1.6 million in care since 2005.

In addition, many of the state's dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants along with dental laboratory technicians and lay volunteers participate in the Iowa Mission of Mercy, which is held on a yearly basis in a different location throughout the State of Iowa. Iowa MOM provides two days of free dental care on a first come-first serve basis. Last year, Iowa dentists served nearly 1,400 patients with more than \$950,000 in free dental health services.

*Attached photo (left to right): Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds; Dr. David Davidson, president-elect, Iowa Dental Association; Governor Terry Branstad; Dr. Bill Strohman, president, Iowa Dental Association; and, Dr. Dan Kegler, vice president, Iowa Dental Association. Dr. Davidson's practice is in Des Moines, Dr. Strohman's is in Algona and Dr. Kegler is from Independence.*