

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MINNESOTA DENTAL ASSOCIATION SPONSORS 10TH YEAR OF *GIVE KIDS A SMILE*
Statewide program brings free dental care to children February 3-4, 2012, WCCO-TV providing phone bank for appointments

Twin Cities (January 24, 2012) – The Minnesota Dental Association is celebrating the 10th year of [Give Kids a Smile](#) on **February 3rd and 4th** and dentists across the state will open their clinic doors and provide free, professional dental care to an estimated 6,000 children.

United Way 2-1-1 — a 24-hour information and referral service — will continue to serve as an invaluable link between the dentists and families in need. Interested parties are encouraged to call **2-1-1** to schedule an appointment.

Tooth decay affects 50 percent of U.S. first graders, but there are many barriers to care. *Give Kids a Smile*, a unique grassroots program, provides children facing barriers with the dental treatment they deserve. In 10 years, Minnesota dentists have provided free care to nearly 45,000 children and donated services valued at more than \$13.5 million.

“We know that the joy and personality of a child is expressed through a smile, but untreated dental problems cause many children to hide their smiles,” said Minnesota Dental Association President and practicing orthodontist Dr. Michael Zakula. “Sadly, tooth decay remains the number one disease in children, and the barriers to care that caused us to start this program 10 years ago remain.”

“Lack of access to dental care is a serious problem,” said Greater Twin Cities United Way Director of Grant Management and Operations Caty Jirik. “The community really needs to come together to address it, and that is exactly what happens with *Give Kids a Smile*. **United Way 2-1-1** leverages its role in providing our 24-hour, seven-day-a-week multilingual information and referral hotline to help parents and caregivers access better care for their children. As a result, more Minnesota kids can then share their smiles with the world. We appreciate WCCO-TV partnering with us to also provide a phone bank to make it easy for parents to schedule appointments.”

In 2012, nearly 3,000 dental professionals and interpreters – including a record-breaking 554 dentists – will volunteer at more than 200 locations statewide. 3M ESPE Dental Products and HealthPartners are sponsoring [TV and radio ads](#). The [Minnesota Dental Foundation](#) accepts grant applications from participating community clinics and educational programs to help defray the cost of supplies.

To schedule an appointment call **United Way 2-1-1** by simply dialing **2-1-1** from a landline or **651-291-0211** from a cell phone. Outstate residents can call toll free, **1-800-543-7709**. Patients should be 18 years or younger and accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Information on specific services will be outlined when an appointment is scheduled.

Viewers can also tune in to **WCCO-TV at 5 p.m. Tuesday January 24th** to speak with phone bank volunteers who can provide more information and assist callers with scheduling an appointment. For more information visit mndental.org or [Facebook](#) to see clinic lists, get facts, and view photos.

About Greater Twin Cities United Way

Greater Twin Cities United Way addresses our community's most critical issues through the *Agenda for Lasting Change* – 10 measurable goals to create pathways out of poverty. We partner with business, government and nonprofit organizations to create lasting solutions and carry out our call-to-action to **LIVE UNITED** by encouraging everyone to Give. Advocate. Volunteer. Greater Twin Cities United Way is an independent organization serving Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott and western Washington counties. Join the movement. **LIVE UNITED**. For more information visit www.unitedwaytwincities.org or call (612) 340-7400.

About the Minnesota Dental Association

The Minnesota Dental Association is the voice of dentistry in Minnesota, representing 80% of practicing dentists. It is committed to the highest standards of oral health and access to care for all Minnesotans. Learn more at: www.mndental.org.

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