Each year, the Minnesota Dental Association coordinates ‘Give Kids a Smile,’ a statewide event that celebrates the generosity of dental professionals by offering two days of free care for low-income children. The event puts smiles on the faces of more than 6,000 kids, with $2 million in free care delivered at 203 locations. Along with the giving spirit of so many dentists and their teams, at the heart of this program’s success is a broad network of community supporters. Below, one clinic describes how it works within its west central Minnesota town to build awareness.

By Carmelo Cinqueonce, MBA
MDA Executive Director

To all who participated in this year’s Give Kids a Smile program, the MDA Board of Trustees and I thank you for your involvement. The more than 3,000 dental professionals who participated are a testament to the giving nature of the profession.

As a first-time observer, I visited several dental practices. As I introduced myself at the front desk of one particular practice and asked to speak with the dentist, a father and his two young daughters were waiting in the lobby. Overhearing the reason for my visit, the father stood and thanked me for helping him and his daughters.

Of course, the thank you belongs to you all. But I couldn’t help but be touched by this gentleman’s gratitude.

By Tricia Hamann
Hamann Family Dentistry in Perham

This is the fifth year of participation at our dental clinic in Give Kids a Smile and the entire staff looks forward to it. The staff members have a shared mission to donate their time and services of quality dental health care to young people from low-income families.

How do we get the word out to people in our area who could benefit from the program? There are many avenues for networking that have proven successful: Public service announcements in local newspapers and radio stations are helpful methods. As an educator for more than 30 years, I know the importance of reaching children and families in their learning spaces. Therefore, I hand deliver posters to local public and private schools, early childhood programs and other children’s organizations like the Boys & Girls Club. We also work with our county organizations, such as the United Way and OTWA Communities Action Council.

Our day begins about 7 a.m. at a local restaurant for a hearty breakfast to increase our energy level and camaraderie for the busy and productive day ahead. Our team is comprised of two dentists, three hygienists, two dental assistants, an office manager and me (communications director and “floater”).

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Reaching kids by reaching into communities

Testament to giving nature of dentistry

By Carmelo Cinqueonce, MBA
MDA Executive Director

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Thank you, participating dentists!

We have at least 20 children scheduled. Parents are grateful for not having to worry about costs of services, including exams, cleanings, fluoride varnishes, sealants, extractions and fillings. With each exam, we demonstrate and encourage correct brushing and flossing techniques, as well as good oral hygiene.

Both Dr. Mike Hamann, Dr. Brooke Hamann and the entire dental team believe that Give Kids a Smile benefits both the caregivers and the recipients. As Dr. Brooke says, “It is amazing to see how happy the children are to get their teeth cleaned, learn about tooth decay prevention and how appreciative the parents are for our services.”

No one says it better than Mother Teresa, “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.” Give Kids a Smile promotes this adage.
One child hadn’t seen a dentist in eight years and made a 50-mile trip to participate in Give Kids a Smile, said fourth-year dental student Casey Chantelois. “It really makes you want to help out,” he said.

- Excerpt from the West Central Tribune, covering the Give Kids a Smile event at Rice Regional Dental Clinic in Willmar, where 28 volunteers provided free care to 80 children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smiles by the number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dentists  ➤  570</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental clinics ➤  203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children ➤  6,136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total dental professionals ➤ 3,015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smile Factory (after care) clinics ➤ 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monetary value ➤ $2 million</td>
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Lisa Cepek, DMD, (at right) visits with a young patient and mother during Park Dental Eden Prairie’s Give Kids a Smile event.