Giving Kids Something to Smile About [1]

February 20, 2014

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For a dozen years, young smiles have been brightened at the CU School of Dental Medicine (SDM) as part of the annual Colorado Dental Association's Give Kids a Smile Day.

On Feb. 7, 133 local children participated in the program held at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Free dental care and education were provided to children who are without dental insurance and who are from low-income families.

"CU is really proud to support the Aurora community that we are a part of, and we know that the community is diverse and has a lot of unmet needs," said Elizabeth Shick, DDS, who specializes in pediatric dentistry as a SDM faculty member. "These children have toothaches, cavities, and are missing days of school, and we are privileged to provide them with a free day of dental care."

Dentists donate time, services

This year, 16 dentists from the community, three SDM faculty members, and 60 SDM students all volunteered their time to treat 133 children in our community who were in need of dental care.

Shick noted that hosting the event at the dental school also gives the students in training an opportunity to be involved in such a great program.

The CU students were paired with a dentist to assist in exams and to perform procedures under the guidance of the dentists. They were able to do everything from paperwork to cleanings and fillings.

"Give Kids a Smile was such a rewarding experience," said third-year dental student Petros Yoon (pictured at top working with a young patient). "Seeing all the dental professionals in our community come to volunteer their time for the children definitely put a smile on my face, too. It's so great to be a part of our school's ongoing mission to give back to our communities."

The dentists provided everything from routine cleanings to tooth extractions -- all while hoping to provide education to parents about preventative care that can be done at home, such as regular brushing and flossing, and encouraging them to find a regular dentist.

"We did a lot of fillings and saw a lot of severely decayed teeth that require extractions," Shick said. "We had Dr. Pattison, an oral surgeon, who volunteered onsite to conduct the extractions. We are talking about children who have not been to the dentist in several years or possibly never and the cavities grow inside the tooth, the structure of the tooth is lost and it cases pain and can be a source of infection, they need to be treated or will cause more pain and infection."

Each young patient also left with new toothbrushes and healthier smiles.

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