

Giving Kids a Healthy Head Start

Title: Community-based Service Learning for Dental Students through Collaboration with Head Start and “Give Kids A Smile Day”

Audience: Head Start children, ages 3-6 (1,400), school-age children, grades K-8 (160)

Partners: Dental and Dental Hygiene students (all years eligible), Dental and Dental Hygiene Faculty, Primary Care and Oral Health Improvement Through Outreach (OHIO) Project administrative staff, Columbus Dental Society, Columbus Children’s Hospital Pediatric Dental Residency Program, CDC Head Start Program, CDI (formerly CMACO) Head Start Program

Dental students need first-hand experiences to appreciate the oral health needs of underserved populations and issues surrounding access to dental care. With the help of an O&E seed grant, all first-year and 80% of second-year dental students, working in pairs and supervised by faculty and community dentists, performed dental screenings and applied fluoride varnish for 3- to 5-year-olds at local Head Start centers. All students wrote reflection papers about their experience.

Volunteer dental and dental hygiene students in third- and fourth-year classes signed up to provide screenings and educational programs at all four Capital Kids after-school programs.

ripples

- The project supported Head Start programs in their efforts to obtain required dental screenings for all enrolled children. Adding fluoride varnish application to the screening has increased children’s access to a beneficial preventive dental service.
- Extending the program to school-age children in Capital Kids improved their access to vital preventive and educational services.
- “Introducing Predoctoral Students to Community-Based Dentistry through Head Start Screenings” was presented by Dr. Janet Bolina and Dr. Hilary A. Soller, DDS, at the annual meeting of the American Dental Education Association, March 2006

healthy smiles



My trip to Head Start clarified the need for health professionals to take an active role in their communities. Providing volunteer services on a regular basis is not going to “kill me,” or cost me a significant amount of lost earnings.
first-year dental student