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For Immediate Release

MCHD Dentistry will “Give Kids a Smile” as part of free dental care event

MORGANTOWN, WV (Jan. 21, 2020) — On Friday, Feb. 7, children without dental insurance will have something to smile about.

That’s when Give Kids a Smile will be held at MCHD Dentistry, which is participating in the American Dental Association (ADA) event for the 10th year in a row.

“It’s an initiative by the ADA that encourages dentists to open up their offices to children to provide dental care to children who don’t have dental insurance,” said Dr. Dan Carrier, director of MCHD Dentistry, Monongalia County Health Department’s full-service dental office.

“It’s to help those kids with treatment and get the care they need and it also raises awareness for the need for oral health in children.”

Appointments can be made for children up to the age of 18 who do not have dental insurance. During a 30- to 40-minute appointment, children will receive a dental checkup, a cleaning and a fluoride treatment with a dental hygienist, and will be seen by Dr. Carrier.

The ADA launched Give Kids a Smile in 2003 as a way for dental care providers to join with others in their communities to offer free dental services to underserved children.

Each year, about 350,000 to 400,000 children nationally benefit from more than 1,500 events. More than 20,000 dentists across the United States are conducting Give Kids a Smile events in 2020.

About 20 children participated in MCHD Dentistry’s inaugural event in 2011, Dr. Carrier said. In 2018, a record 64 children were seen during Give Kids a Smile. A snowstorm

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prevented MCHD Dentistry from reaching that number in 2019 and also prompted a new goal: to also provide some fillings and other restorative care for the patients who are seen. A chair will be left open for this purpose.

“In the past, we’ve been focused on beating the previous year,” Dr. Carrier said. “I think what we’re looking at now is the impact we have with kids who are here. In the past, we haven’t had space to be able to fix teeth. We’re now trying to do that more.”

Another change in 2019 was the addition of a second GKAS event, which was held in August.

“We were able to do that because of some grant money we received from Your Community Foundation of North Central West Virginia,” Dr. Carrier said.

Good oral health is vital for good overall health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov), cavities are one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood in the U.S. Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing and learning.

Also, the CDC reports, about 1 in 5 children ages 5 to 11 years of age have at least one untreated decayed tooth. About 1 in 7 adolescents ages 12 to 19 years old have at least one untreated decayed tooth. And, at 25 percent, children ages 5 to 19 years of age from low-income families are twice as likely to have cavities than children from higher-income households. That figure is 11 percent.

In addition to the checkup, children and their parents participating in Give Kids a Smile will also receive oral health education materials.

“We’ll have balloons and toothbrushes to give away,” Dr. Carrier said. “We do everything we can to make it a positive, fun day for the kids.”

Parents and guardians who plan to bring their children to Give Kids a Smile should remember:

- The event is only for children up to age 18 without dental insurance.
- The child must have an appointment.
- Appointments are limited and are expected to fill up quickly.

To make an appointment for Give Kids a Smile, call 304-598-5108. Directions to MCHD Dentistry can be found on our website at monchd.org/dentistry.

For more information on MCHD, check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd for up-to-date information on health and safety.