



## For Immediate Release

### **Oral Health Initiative Continues Expansion Reaching 10,000 Children Nationally**

*Organized dentistry's support for innovative program developed to help reduce oral health disparities, fuels growth, demonstrates love affair and hope for future outcomes.*

Owings Mills, MD (August 3, 2010). In 2009, The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute reached 5,000 children in Maryland, Nebraska and Tennessee with their educational lunch box and color coordinated dental care in a carrot case. Then in 2010, the program expanded to 14 more states and has now reached 10,000 but not without avid support from dental professionals throughout the nation. The *Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks®* program has kindled a love affair with the oral health care team that began in 2008 with the launch of the initiative. The initial funding for the educational oral health program was made possible by the Dental Trade Alliance that same year.

Participation in the *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program by members of organized dentistry, led most often by their student chapters, has continued allowing more school children to receive the education filled container. This type of support from dental students and members of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, American Association of Public Health Dentistry, American Association of Women Dentists, American Dental Association, American Dental Hygiene Association, Academy of General Dentistry, Hispanic Dental Association, National Dental Association, National Dental Hygiene Association and Society of American Indian Dentists, shows the overwhelming value felt for this innovative initiative. The volunteerism displayed by organized dentistry is the kind of leadership that is needed to help reduce and eventually eliminate the oral health disparities that plague too many men, women and children in our country. This same leadership has been the major spark that helped fuel the growth and expansion of *Lessons In A Lunch Box* nationally. The commitment and dedication of the many community dentists, local dental schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers, that continue to be the "safety-net" providers for so many Americans, demonstrate the love affair with the initiative and the hope for favorable future outcomes.

It was a most pleasant surprise to see the inclusion of a beautiful announcement dedicated to the *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program included in the recent National Dental Association convention program booklet recording the achievement of reaching 10,000. During the convention, NDA president, Dr. Walter Owens spoke about his personal experiences while participating with the lunch box initiative along side Meharry Medical College dental students in Nashville. He eloquently highlighted the program during the President's Symposium and again at the President's Gala. In both instances, his words echoed the desperate need for innovations to help eliminate the oral health disparities that disproportionately cripple ethnic minorities.

The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute has expressed in previous statements how much they appreciate and will always acknowledge the support of dental professionals, physicians, nurses, corporate visionaries and legislative leaders for their continued help in the expansion and success of *Lessons In A Lunch Box*. Though the downturns in the economy have threatened the initiative from being able to further expand this fall, the nonprofit organization's core leaders will continue their vigilant campaign to identify and secure more funding for the program. The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute invites patrons to contribute, lend a hand at the elementary school events and to visit [www.mycohi.org](http://www.mycohi.org) to learn more about the *Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks®* program and all of the efforts that have been developed to especially empower the neediest citizens.

*Prevention that Empowers!*