



For Immediate Release

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Dental Students Excited To Volunteer Support For Elementary School Oral Health Program

Spirit of benevolence invaluable to the future of the dental profession and oral health care

Baltimore, MD. Friday, 14 March 2008 - Dental students from the University of Maryland, Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and Howard University College of Dentistry came to Jessup Elementary School to support the “*Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks*” program. Students from both dental schools showed up in double digits to offer their help to The Maryland Children’s Oral Health Institute. The student doctors working in groups of two were motivated and ready to help some 187 very excited kindergarten through second grade children learn about their newly acquired oral health care lunch boxes.

The *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program launched on January 18th at Franklin Square Elementary School in conjunction with the kick off of “Give Kids A Smile®” in Maryland. Despite the snowy weather, 183 children attended classes and went home delighted with lunch boxes in hand. In February, students also assisted with the oral health presentations and lunch box distribution at Waverly Elementary School. The future dentists cheerfully demonstrated flossing and brushing. Triumphant pandemonium erupted when lunch boxes were given to the 432 jubilant children.

On Saturday March 1st, freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior students from the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery descended on The Maryland Children’s Oral Health Institute to make up a most enthusiastic lunch box packaging workforce. They placed the oral hygiene products in the lunch containers and applied the “See Yourself Becoming A Dentist” sticker at the opening. By the end of their 2-hour volunteer work shift, the youth had completed a grand total of 2,040 lunch boxes. Food and beverages were provided for the crew of volunteers. Some students were able to acquire needed community service requirements.

Dental students are often unaware of the immense pain, suffering and lack of awareness about proper oral health care that is pervasive in deprived rural and inner city communities. It was not until the tragic death of 12 year-old Deamonte Driver last year that students began to understand more about the access to dental care challenges facing the U.S. A movement to require grassroots, community outreach prerequisites may accelerate the progress that is necessary to improve access to care. Students who participate in efforts like *Lessons In A Lunch Box* may prove to help develop an invaluable culture of future dentists. They may help to relieve the burden of identifying dentists who are willing to provide treatment for patients with government subsidized health care coverage. Their courage and leadership will help to shape the character of dentists graduating in the 21st century.

Prevention that Empowers!