



For Immediate Release

Students Receive Captivating Lunch Boxes At Blue Ribbon Celebration

Cecil Elementary School praised by giant supporter of oral health care.

Baltimore, MD (September 30, 2008) – Dentists from the Maryland Dental Society (MDS) and Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA), Executive Director, Frank McLaughlin along with students from the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery (BCDS) and Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) came to volunteer. The dental professionals joined 7th District Congressman Elijah E. Cummings to honor the students at Cecil Elementary School and to distribute lunch boxes to the children. The celebration surrounded the September 9th announcement of the No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Secretary of Education that included Cecil Elementary School. The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

The atmosphere was joyous when the children entered the auditorium greeted by a backdrop of bright orange lunch boxes adorning the stage. Congressman Cummings congratulated the children for receiving the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award and encouraged them to continue to have pride in their academic achievements. He talked about the importance of having good oral health. When the children were asked to raise their hand if they ever had a toothache, more than two thirds were held up. Dr. Winifred Booker, CEO & Director of Development for The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute, accompanied Congressman Cummings on the stage as he spoke. She and Dr. Nathan Fletcher, President of the National Dental Association, both noted the astounding number of children who sit in the classroom day after day suffering from tooth decay as was demonstrated by the number of little raised hands.

Cummings has made oral health care a top priority in his passionate, political crusade to help improve the lives of children and families in Maryland and throughout the country. The 2000 Surgeon General's Report documents that more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness and the Congressman is determined to do his part to change the daunting statistics. Since the death of 12 year-old Deamonte Driver in 2007 from an abscessed tooth, he has sponsored and cosponsored invaluable oral health care legislation.

Congressman Cummings feels the Lessons in a Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks program is a captivating way to motivate and teach children about oral health care. "The lunch box offers an appealing incentive to the younger students for doing so well in school." The ingeniously crafted container illustrates flossing and brushing on the inside. My Pyramid for Kids, a USDA nutritional diagram, is also displayed inside of the box. The lunch box provides children with their very own "Dental Care in a Carrot" case to keep all of the dental hygiene essentials together. The carrot case is designed to store a toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss and a rinse cup! A colorful sand timer is also a part of the charming ensemble. The children applauded and cheered the invaluable gift.

The president of the Baltimore City Counsel, Mrs. Stephanie Rawlings Blake, also took the opportunity to join the congressman in congratulating the children on their academic achievement. She too was ready to roll up her sleeves to help give the dental health lunch boxes to the honor students.

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Mrs. Francine Stokes McElveen, President of the Baltimore Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, attended the event. Cummings thanked The Links, one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of women, for their generous support of the lunch box program.

The health professionals showed two, very informative, educational dental films, "Tooth Brushing With Charlie Brown" and "It's Dental Flossophy Charlie Brown." They demonstrated proper oral hygiene techniques with the dental hygiene students from the BCCC taking the lead. Faculty from the BCCC, Associate Professor, Dr. Edna Street-Jones and Assistant Professor, Ms. Roslyn Chester looked on proudly. Dr. Leslie E. Grant, Director of Advocacy & Outreach for The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute, explained to the students how to navigate their newly acquired lunch box and carrot case rewards.

Final remarks were given from Mrs. Sherry Holland Senter, Education Recourse Consultant to the Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute. A former Baltimore City elementary school teacher, Mrs. Senter spoke passionately about the impact oral health neglect has on academic achievement among young students. The teachers were encouraged to take the necessary action and promote oral health education in their classroom by using the Lessons In A Lunch Box Teacher's Guide.

More than 4,000 lunch boxes were given to children in Maryland during the last school year. Please visit Youtube at *mycohi* to view the chronological video introduction of the Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks program.

For more information about and The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute visit www.mycohi.org or call 866-508-7400.

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