

HEALTHY SMILES HEALTHY CHILDREN

Rotary Club of Whittier

Whittier, CA 10/27/14 – To provide a total of four days of oral health and nutrition days at West Whittier Elementary and Lydia Jackson Elementary the week of October 20th through 30th (2014) in the Whittier City School District, providing free dental screenings, fluoride treatment, oral health and nutrition education, and referral to care to approximately 800 elementary age children.

The Rotary Club of Whittier chartered by Rotary International on October 17, 1922, is committed to eradicating polio world-wide, providing humanitarian service locally, encouraging high ethical standards, and helping to build goodwill and peace in the world.

Dental disease is the most chronic childhood disease, four times more common than Asthma. Children living with untreated dental disease are suffering from chronic toothaches and painful abscesses. They cannot eat, drink or sleep normally, have trouble focusing in school and miss more days of school as a result of dental pain. Untreated dental disease can also lead to systemic problems when infections in the mouth spread to other parts of the body. Dental disease can be the culprit behind ear and throat infections, and is also documented risk for cardiovascular disease and other conditions.

According to the 2006 "Mommy it Hurts to Chew," California Smile Survey, 50% of kindergarteners already have dental decay by the time they are in third grade, and over 70% of children have a history of tooth decay. Minorities and children of lower socioeconomic strata are also shown to have a high prevalence of dental caries. In addition, studies continue to show that the incidence of dental disease in children is directly correlated with poverty, such as the most recent 2014 Children Now, California Report Card, where California ranks a "D+" in oral health.

There are a substantial number of low income children in Whittier with extensive dental disease, cavities and infections that are rampant not in just one tooth, but several, or in the worst cases, more than half of all their baby teeth. For example, 10.2% of children have never been to the dentist and 15.7% of children did not visit a dentist in the past year due to the inability to afford it and/or had no insurance. Children living in poverty face obstacles in accessing dental care, especially pediatric and multi-specialty dental treatment.

The Rotary Club of Whittier, in partnership with Children's Dental Health Clinic, is addressing this very important issue through ***Healthy Smiles Healthy Children*** - an oral health and nutrition program at West Whittier Elementary School and Lydia Jackson Elementary School. This has been made possible through the generosity of Rotary District 5320, Honorable Supervisor Don Knabe, and Corporate Sponsors PIH Health, Pacific Western Bank, and Republic Services.

For further information, or to donate, visit www.whittierrotary.org

