

It all starts with a smile

Free service is part of national "Give Kids A Smile" day.

NORWALK

By CHASE WRIGHT

Hour Staff Writer

Local dentists are participating this week in a free dental screening program that's sure to make Norwalk families smile.

Each year on the first Friday in February, thousands of the nation's dentists provide free oral health care services to children from low-income families across the country.

Norwalk dentist Dr. Carol Felder has participated in the American Dental Association's "Give Kids a Smile" day since the program's inception.

"The program gives those who otherwise would not be able to visit the dentist, a chance to discuss their oral concerns and become educated on oral health care," she said.

Felder is offering free dental cleanings and oral health care education to children without insurance on Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at her office, 606 West Ave., Suite C.

To schedule an appointment, call (203) 847-1122.

Felder, who opened her private practice in Norwalk last year after working for years in the community health care field, said she understands the need for good oral hygiene.

"Working in a community health center, I've seen the excessive amount of dental disease in children, so I think it's important to give back where I can," she said.

Dental cavities are the leading disease among children, and poor oral health can complicate overall general health and well-being, she said.

Felder is not the only local dentist registered to participate in the program. Anderson Dental on Main Avenue is also participating, as is the Day Street Community Health Center.

The health center -- formerly Norwalk Smiles -- has participated in the program for the past four years. Last year, dentists at the health center provided free cleanings, exams, sealants, fillings, fluoride treatments and dental education to 50 children, according to Adele Gordon, director of Fairfield County sites for Community Health Center, Inc.

"It's more and more about trying to get younger children in as a preventative measure for care," Gordon said. "There's also an access problem for children that are uninsured to receive dental care."

In difficult economic times such as these, Gordon said many families ignore dental issues, and instead opt to allocate their scarce resources elsewhere.

The free clinic is being offered at the Day Street Community Health Center, 49 Day St., on Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (203)854-9292 or (203)969-0802.