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February 20, 2014 | Hope Howley Brigham, Community Health Center, Inc. (Communication Rep), Middletown

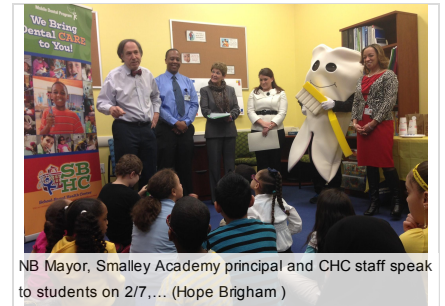
For the past twelve years, organizations in Connecticut from public and private foundations have come together to create an oral health awareness movement. The American Dental Association (ADA) began the Give Kids a Smile (GKAS) program in 2002 as a way for ADA members to join with others in the community to provide dental services to underserved children. Eleven years ago the Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) became one of the participants of Give Kid's a Smile Day to help target the underserved populations among their regular patient demographic. Each year, approximately 450,000 children benefit from more than 1500 Give Kids Smile events in the US.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, early childhood cavities are the most common chronic disease in children and although noteworthy improvements have been made in the past decade, oral health significance is still being overlooked. One major way CHC has helped increase children's access to oral health services is through the mobile dental program which brings dental services directly to over 170 CT Schools. Mobile Dental services have been funded through different Connecticut Health Foundation grants which work to support the integration of oral health at every point where children and their families intersect with health care, human service and education systems.

Once again this year, CHC participated in the American Dental Association's 12th annual Give Kids A Smile Day (GKASD) on Friday, Feb. 7 with a kickoff event at Smalley Academy in New Britain. The event involved students from the New Britain elementary school listening to Mayor Erin Stewart give a proclamation along with CHC leadership staff who added encouraging words in the School Based Health Center office. "Our goal is to have oral health completely integrated into a family's concept of health and wellness," stated Yvette Highsmith Francis, the CHC director of Hartford & New Haven County sites.

The Community Health Center, Inc. organized various GKAS events during this past month in their New Britain, Meriden, Old Saybrook, Norwalk, Stamford, New London, Waterbury & Middletown sites along with other private dentists across the state who offered free cleanings, exams, sealants, fillings, fluoride treatments and dental education to children with HUSKY insurance or no dental insurance. The events are free and open to all children without a regular dental home. For more information about the Mobile Dental Program at CHC please call 860-224-3642 ext. 5163 or email GooleyJ@chc1.com.

"CHC's goal for Give Kids a Smile day is to provide access to the full scope of dental services and connect children and families to a regular dental provider to set them on their way to a healthy smile for a lifetime." According to CHC's Chief Dental Officer, Margaret Drozdowski Maule, DMD, MBA. "Give Kids a Smile Day is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the importance of oral health and regular dental care, as well as the delivery of the services to the children who need them".



NB Mayor, Smalley Academy principal and CHC staff speak to students on 2/7,... (Hope Brigham)

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