

Give Kids A Smile offers free dental services for the uninsured

By JEFF EYDT Hour Staff Writer



Dental hygienist Maryann Llinas gets a high five after a cleaning and fluoride treatment during Give Kids A Smile Day



Tooth fairy wings and a wand Marjorie Constant, Mobile Dental Outreach Coordinator with AmeriCorps, center shares a smile with Amy Taylor, VP Western region CHC, left and Enid Guzman Care Coordinator Fairfield County CHC.



At the coloring table AmeriCorps member Raymond Uymatiao hands out goodie bags with toothbrushes and toothpaste to kids for Give Kids A Smile Day.



Dental Assistant Aileen Morales and Dr. Sharon Song fill some cavities and perform a full exam during Give Kids A Smile Day.



NORWALK — Uninsured kids from all around the Norwalk area were able to receive free dental services at the Day Street Community Health Center's (CHC) dentist office, located at 49 Day St., on Friday as part of the Give Kids A Smile national event.

"The hygienists are doing dental cleanings, sealants, bite wings for x-rays, fluoride treatment and exams," said Enid Guzman, care coordinator at CHC. "If the dentists see any teeth that need restoring, they will do the restorings."

Children 17 and younger were allowed to have their teeth examined and cleaned from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"We really are targeting the kids who do not have insurance because if we didn't, they would never get the care they needed — and we offer so many different types of care," said Marjorie Constant, an AmeriCorp member and the mobile dental outreach coordinator. "If a kid has a cavity and needs a filling, we can schedule that filling to take place later in the afternoon."

CHC saw 56 kids throughout the day, using a staff of two dentists and three hygienists.

"It's been really busy but it's been going smooth," said Constant.

Give Kids A Smile was launched nationally in 2003 by the American Dental Association, where more than 5 million underserved children have received free oral health services.

"This event has evolved and changed over the years but the constant has always been free dental services — free hygiene and restorative care for uninsured children," said Amy Taylor, vice president of CHC. "In the beginning we would invite outside private dentists where we would schedule the event on a weekend. But with the changing landscape and the need for service, we changed it so just our staff provides the service and that we do it on a day that kids are not in school."

Most of the children who participated in Give Kids a Smile were connected to the CHC through their mobile program that goes to the schools and provide cleanings and fluoride treatments. The hygienists are able to identify which children have cavities or any other restorative needs so that they can be scheduled for dental appointments.

"Children with Medicaid get two hygiene appointments per year — a dental cleaning," said Taylor. "But children also get fluoride varnish every three months, which has been clinically proven to reduce (cavities) and helps to restore the enamel if (cavities) have started."

Trader Joes, located at 436 Boston Post Rd., donated three cases of fruits for the children to take home after their free dental appointments.

"It really is wonderful to see all these kids getting the care they need," said Mary Anne Llina, a dental hygienist at CHC. "The parents have been very responsive to the event."

For more information or to enroll in the CHC's mobile program, visit www.sbhc1.com or www.chc1.com.