

Free Dental Care at Annual Give Kids A Smile Day at SIU SDM: More than 200 Receive \$50K in Free Care

by Doug McIlhagga
September 17 2019 9:01 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University's School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) invites parents of qualified children between the ages of 3-13 to attend the 14th annual Give Kids A Smile Day from 7:30 a.m.-noon on Columbus Day, Monday, Oct. 14 at the SDM's main clinic in building 263, 2800 College Ave. in Alton.

Children qualified to participate in the event are those eligible for free and reduced-priced meal programs. There is no pre-registration. Registration is first-come, first-served, beginning at 7:30 a.m. in the gym, building 281, located on Annex St. off College Ave. Registration closes at noon.

A parent or guardian must accompany each child in order to be treated. Fun activities for children will take place in the gym throughout the event. As the wait and treatment may sometimes take several hours, parents are encouraged to bring a healthy snack with them for young children. SDM first-year dental students will host a variety of "Smile Stations" featuring fun, educational activities and games to help children learn the importance of a good diet and oral hygiene.

Give Kids a Smile Day offers free comprehensive dental care, including examinations, x-rays, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings, sealants, stainless steel crowns and extractions. All dental services will be provided by SIU SDM faculty, students and staff, and Lewis and Clark Community College dental assisting and dental hygiene faculty and students. Professionals and volunteers from the community also participate.

"Our annual Columbus Day event provides a wonderful opportunity to provide treatment to hundreds of children," said Katie Kosten, DMD, assistant professor in the SIU SDM and director of community dentistry. "The holiday affords those needing urgent and routine dental care to come see us. Children have their dental concerns addressed and have some fun at the same time."

Give Kids A Smile Day is a national event sponsored by the American Dental Association to provide free dental treatment for underserved children. The event is organized to promote community awareness of the need for dental services among the underserved.

Because Give Kids a Smile Day is held on a holiday when school is not in session, an annual average of more than 200 children receive care from dental professionals at the SDM. The volunteer dentists and staff offer an annual average of more than \$50,000 in preventive, restorative and surgical treatment for the children who participate.

For more information, contact Valerie Donahue at 618-474-7200 or vdonahu@siue.edu.

The SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at its patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.

Tooth Fairies entertain a young patient at the annual SIU School of Dental Medicine Give Kids A Smile Day.