

Riverbend Head Start and Family Services Reminds Area Residents of the Importance of Dental Hygiene During Halloween Celebrations

October 27 2010 8:11 AM



MADISON COUNTY, IL - Candy corn, popcorn balls and waxy vampire teeth are the treats that many associate with the month of October. It's not a coincidence that this month is also National Dental Hygiene Month, prompting Riverbend Head Start & Family Services (RHSFS) to remind area residents, particularly children, to pay extra attention to oral health especially when candy consumption is on the rise.

Parents can take care of their teeth and serve as a good role model for their children by following these oral health tips all year-round, which include:

- Flossing twice each day to get rid of all of the sticky, sugary treats between your teeth.
- Brushing at least twice a day. Try to make a habit of it after every meal.
- Scheduling regular dental visits every six months.

As Linda Buchanan, Health Services Coordinator for RHSFS, explains, “Basic education of oral health care is crucial to everyone, especially children. RHSFS is dedicating this month to spelling out the importance of dental hygiene to its clients and making sure that they are getting the help they need for a lifetime of proper dental health practices.”

Through productive partnerships between Lewis & Clark Community College’s dental clinic, Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine, and Miles of Smiles, RHSFS is able to provide oral health care to its clients throughout Madison County. This includes screenings, cleanings, fillings, sealants, treatments, surgeries and parent education. Last year alone, RHSFS provided \$83,500 in dental services to its clients.

Continually working to combat childhood poverty, RHSFS recognizes the lack of dental health education among lower income families which leads to many cases of moderate to severe dental problems, one most notably being baby bottle syndrome. This occurs when a baby’s teeth are frequently in contact with sugars from liquids such as formula, juices, and milk.

There are strong comparisons between dental diseases and family income. Underprivileged children suffer twice as much from dental cavities, or tooth decay, as their more privileged peers, and their disease is more likely to be untreated. Professional care is necessary for maintaining oral health. The American Dental Association suggests that children should have their first dental appointment before their first birthday, yet 25 percent of children living in poverty have not seen a dentist before entering kindergarten.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services began supporting the families and individuals of Madison County in 1916. More than 90 years later, Riverbend Head Start & Family Services offers services through its Head Start, Early Head Start and Transitions Counseling programs that serve more than 4,000 people each year. For the young child Riverbend Head Start & Family Services offer early childhood education, as well as health and nutrition services. For families and individuals they offer mental health counseling, social services, family literacy and various individual strengthening and family support services. For more information about Riverbend Head Start & Family Services and its program, please visit www.riverbendfamilies.org or call (618) 463-5946.

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