

# **SIU SDM Provides Nearly \$53,000 in Free Dental Care at Give Kids a Smile Day**

by Megan Wieser

October 15 2020 3:14 PM



EDWARDSVILLE – The Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine's (SDM) 15th annual Give Kids a Smile Day held Monday, Oct. 12 was a huge success, with more than 110 children between the ages of 3-13 receiving a combined \$52,990 worth of free preventative, restorative and surgical dental treatment.

“This was one of our most successful events in recent years. We served 30 more children than last year,” said SIU SDM Director of Community Dentistry Katie Kosten, DMD. “Aside from addressing patients’ immediate dental needs, the other big goal of Give Kids a Smile Day is to make sure each patient has an established dental home.”

“We were able to connect with a lot of patients who otherwise did not have a dentist of record, and start the process of them becoming patients at the SIU SDM,” she added. “This is the best way for us to make sure there is continuity of care, so these children don’t fall through the cracks.”

Care included examinations, x-rays, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings, sealants, stainless steel crowns and extractions. All services were provided by SIU SDM faculty, students and staff. Due to extra precautions surrounding COVID-19, the event did not include its staple Smile Stations, but Kosten notes all went smoothly.

“We are accustomed to protecting our patients, providers and staff every day in our clinic, so much was business as usual,” Kosten explained. “Parents and patients were grateful, and we hope that they had a positive experience. We missed being able to host the Smile Stations in the gymnasium, but we hope to bring that back in future years.”

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.

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.

Photo: Checking in at the SIU SDM for Give Kids a Smile Day are mom Tarshaee Turner and children (L-R) Tarjayee, Tarmajae and Taliyah.