

# **\$61,125 In Free Dental Care Provided During SIU SDM Give Kids A Smile Day**

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE – More than \$61,000 worth of free preventative, restorative and surgical dental treatment was provided during Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine's (SIU SDM) 16<sup>th</sup> annual Give Kids a Smile Day. On Monday, Oct. 11, a record 126 children between the ages of 3-13 received critical dental care through the community outreach initiative.

“This was our most successful program by far in terms of patients seen and dentistry provided since I've been involved with GKAS,” said SIU SDM Director of Community Dentistry Katie Kosten, DMD. “Last year COVID forced us to take lemons and make lemonade. We had to reassess how we did everything, and in doing so, we were able to implement some changes that allowed us to help more children. And that's always the bottom line: helping as many children as possible with the highest quality care possible.”

“Give Kids a Smile Day is one of my favorite initiatives,” added SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke. “It captures our community spirit and a focus on students in a wonderfully unique way. Our students and faculty use their excellent skills, and community members receive free services that help these children experience life in significantly better ways. We all appreciate the efforts of the SIU School of Dental Medicine.”

Care included examinations, x-rays, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings, sealants, stainless steel crowns, and extractions. In addition, all patients without an established dentist were given the opportunity to become patients at SIU SDM. All services were provided by SIU SDM faculty, students, staff, and volunteer dental professionals.

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.

SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at 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 with 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.