



SIU Dental students bring smiles, brushing, flossing lessons to Riverbender.com Community Center kids

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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The Riverbender.com Community Center recently offered an outreach that featured a toothbrush, toothpaste and a smile.

Southern Illinois University Dental School in Alton provided two students under the direction of Dr. Poonam Jain to the center to show kids the proper way to brush and floss. Poonam is director of community dentistry for SIU Dental School.

Blake Ferando and Brandon Yeager were the two SIU-E dental students who conducted the dental outreach and John Hentrich, Volunteer Executive Director of the Riverbender.com Community Center, had nothing but praise for them and their impact on the children.

Yeager said it was a meaningful experience to work with Hentrich and the Riverbender.com Community Center kids.

“It is a rewarding to give something back to the community around us,” Yeager said. “We have the ability to work with the kids and they are always excited. We do community work at assisted living places and they always have the best questions.”

Of all the community service events, Yeager said the Riverbender.com Community Center was his favorite because it is working with kids.

“It is our goal to provide a preventative treatment aspect and get them started on the right track,” he said.

For Yeager, studying dentistry is something he loves to do.

“Becoming a dentist is something I wanted to do since I was little,” he said. “I had trauma one day with one of my front teeth knocked out playing sports. I was about 10 years old. My dentist was awesome and really cool and I felt dentistry is something kids shouldn’t be afraid of. Becoming a dentist has been one of the driving forces of my life.”

Yeager said he and Fernando had a wonderful time working with the kids at the Community Center.

“I was surprised how many were there utilizing that resource,” he said. “The kids were interactive and all were in good spirits. We just approached the kids and tried to get our idea of dentistry across to them.”

Yeager said he hopes to return to the Community Center soon to do another presentation and Hentrich said he would welcome him back anytime.

“This was a nice service to our kids at the Community Center,” he said. “We hope to have more of these kinds of service events for children in the future and we definitely will have the SIU Dental School students back.”