

SIU School of Dental Medicine Give Kids A Smile Day serves more than 160

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ALTON - Southern Illinois University's School of Dental Medicine served 167 children at its 10th annual Give Kids A Smile Day Monday, Oct. 12, at the School's main clinic in Alton. The total dental treatment provided was valued at \$63,084.

Give Kids A Smile Day provides free comprehensive dental care, including examinations, X-rays, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings and extractions. All services were provided by SIU School of Dental Medicine faculty, students and staff, members of the Madison and St. Clair district dental societies, Lewis and Clark Community College dental assisting and dental hygiene faculty and students, and faculty and students from the Missouri College of Assisting. Professionals and volunteers from the community also participated.

“We saw a lot of families for whom we have provided treatment in past years,” said Dr. Poonam Jain, professor in the SIU School of Dental Medicine and director of community dentistry. “Each of these families conveyed their appreciation for our efforts to provide dental care to children who would not be able to access it otherwise.”

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. Children qualified to participate in the event were those eligible for free and reduced-priced meal programs.

First-year dental students from the SIU School of Dental Medicine hosted a “Smile Station” featuring fun, educational activities and games to help children learn the importance of a good diet, oral hygiene and the connections between their mouths and bodies.

“This year’s Smile Station was certainly the best we have ever had,” Jain said. “The parents and guardians of kids we treated today were extremely appreciative of the students’ enthusiasm and knowledge. The education regarding diet and nutrition, oral-systemic connections and oral hygiene, soda experiments and the spinning wheel were greatly appreciated.

“The face painting and balloon crafts were simply amazing! In addition, the music provided by the SDM Band comprised of first and second year students added tremendously to our Smile Station. It is always wonderful to see how much talent, other than dental skills, our students possess.”

“Our corporate partners - Henry Schein Dental, Colgate and GC America - donated goodie bags for the kids, several disposable items (bibs, cotton products, masks, etc.), fluoride varnish and restorative material for the event, and they were instrumental in our success,” Jain said.