

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Elaine Loyack
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(919) 397-6944**North Carolina Nonprofits Receive Funding to Provide Free Dental Care & Education to Children in Need***The Smiles for Kids grant program awarded over \$87,000 in mini-grants to nonprofits across the state*

RALEIGH, NC: Nearly 113,000 children will benefit from oral health services or oral health education provided through this year's Smiles for Kids grants. The Delta Dental Foundation (DDF), the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of North Carolina (DDNC), recently awarded mini-grants totaling \$87,120 to 20 nonprofit organizations across North Carolina. This is the program's largest year of giving to date, after an increase in both need and health care disparities over the last year.

In North Carolina, 15.3 percent of kindergarten students already have untreated tooth decay.¹ Through the Smiles for Kids program, the DDF strives to educate the public on the importance of preventative oral health care and to help fund initiatives and programs designed to promote children's oral health, especially to those in systemically disadvantaged areas. The program supports safety net dental clinics and North Carolina nonprofits, which provide critical dental services and education to local residents.

Curt Ladig, President and CEO of Delta Dental of North Carolina, initiated the program when he joined DDNC in 2010. Since then, the DDF has invested more than \$600,000 through the program, which has touched the lives of more than 445,000 underserved children and families in the state. This year, the 20 [grant recipients](#) span 37 North Carolina counties.

"Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease, and children miss 51 million hours of school every year in the United States due to dental issues,"² said Ladig. "It is our hope that this year's grants will help provide more access to dental care and dental health education for children who may not otherwise have it, allowing them to show up to school—in person or virtually—healthy and ready to learn. Because Delta Dental believes that everyone deserves a healthy smile."

In considering grants, the DDF evaluates each application on its own merits. It considers the programs in which the organization is engaged, the constituencies it serves, the services it offers, its accountability and its fundraising practices, and the level of local community support it attracts.

To view the full list of this year's grant recipients, click here: <http://www.deltadentalinc.com/smilesforkids>

¹ North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. "NC Oral Health Regional Snapshot."
https://publichealth.nc.gov/oralhealth/docs/OralHealthSnapshots_12.22.20-NC.pdf. Web. December 2020.

² Jackson, S. L., Vann, W. F., Jr, Kotch, J. B., Pahel, B. T., & Lee, J. Y. (2011). Impact of poor oral health on children's school attendance and performance. *American journal of public health, 101*(10), 1900–1906.
<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2010.200915>

About Delta Dental of North Carolina

Founded in 1970, not-for-profit Delta Dental of North Carolina is the state's leading dental insurer. With the largest network of dentists in the state, DDNC provides insurance to businesses as part of their employee benefits and directly to individuals and families. Based in Raleigh, DDNC brings joy to local communities by funding initiatives that ensure the oral health, quality education and physical well-being of all North Carolinians. To learn more about DDNC, visit www.deltadentalnc.com.

About the Delta Dental Foundation

The Delta Dental Foundation (DDF) is a nonprofit, charitable organization established in 1980, which serves as the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and North Carolina. The DDF is dedicated to developing and enhancing partnerships and programs to improve oral and overall health and health equity. For more information, visit www.deltadental.foundation.

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