

Dental Visits are Fun for Children

The children wore silly sunglasses and paper crowns while dancing down the hallways of the LSUHSC School of Dentistry (LSUSD) during the annual Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) day. Sponsored by the American Dental Association every February during Children's Dental Health Month, this nationwide event is designed to spotlight the dental needs of children.

For Dr. Janice Townsend, interim chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, a festive environment was a key component of the effort. "All our attitudes about life are formed when we are young. It's vital that we teach children that dentistry is good and that it will help them throughout their lives. In order to do so, we have to make it fun for a child to go to the dentist."

Under Dr. Townsend's leadership and in collaboration with the New Orleans Dental Association and the Children's Dental Health Month Committee, LSUSD organized a team of 39 dentists, residents in the pediatric dentistry program and dental hygienists to provide screenings for 50 kindergarten children from W. Smith Elementary School in Violet, Louisiana. This undertaking was led by Dr. Kellie Axelrad and Dr. Nicole Boxberger, both graduates of the pediatric dentistry program. At Children's Hospital, Dr. Pam Shaw, also a graduate of the LSUSD program, provided care for an additional six children.

About 25% of the children were in need of dental treatment and some needed urgent care. Each child was given an extraoral and soft tissue exam and also goody bags with toothbrushes and toothpaste. Led by Jennifer Hew, faculty member in the Dental Hygiene program, an enthusiastic team of dental hygiene students and their teachers gave the children personal instruction on how to brush and floss. Later, the lessons were reinforced by a video featuring Dudley the Dinosaur.

On Friday, February 10, a team of seven dentists and dental assistants participated in an awareness event at the New Orleans Hornets basketball game. They provided



Dr. Nicole Boxberger shows Kenya the correct way to brush her teeth.

counseling to 550 basketball fans on oral hygiene and diet along with gifts of toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Dr. Townsend remarked, "I had a fabulous time and I think our kids really enjoyed the care they received." Media coverage this year included television interviews on the local Fox station and NBC affiliate, along with an article in The Times-Picayune.

Nationwide, there were 1,615 such GKAS events with 29,885 dental professional

volunteers caring for 405,614 children.

According to Dr. Henry Gremillion, dean of LSUSD, outreach programs are essential to the dental school's philosophy of "Education First." "Reaching out to underserved populations is a win-win for everyone involved. The children benefit. Our students benefit. It is essential that we maintain a caring, service-minded environment at the LSUHSC School of Dentistry."



Colten Ducote, second-year dental student, poses with Tyler.