

Ontario-Montclair

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST 5 SAN BERNARDINO AND SMILE SBC KICK OFF NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH WITH DENTAL SCREENING EVENT FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS AT HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ontario, CA (January 30, 2025) – Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States. To help young children and their families, First 5 San Bernardino and the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's local oral health program Smile SBC are joining forces to promote healthy pediatric oral care during National Children's Dental Health Month in February.

“Little Teeth, Big Responsibility” urges parents of young children to start good dental care habits early because healthy baby teeth form healthy adult teeth. This means establishing daily brushing routines, avoiding sugary drinks and taking baby to the dentist by their first birthday or first tooth. Free or low-cost dentists can be found by visiting Smile SBC's “Find a Dentist” webpage.

“It's easy to overlook the importance of our child's baby teeth, and let's face it, getting your toddler to brush their teeth can be a struggle all of us can relate to,” said First 5 San Bernardino Executive Director Karen Scott. “This is why we team up with Smile SBC every year to help families and children make dental care a priority even before your baby has teeth!” Ontario-Montclair School District Superintendent Dr. James Q. Hammond shared, “As educators, we recognize that a child's success extends beyond the classroom. By fostering partnerships that emphasize early dental care and healthy habits, we are investing in their overall well-being and lifelong learning.”

First 5 San Bernardino kicked off their campaign with a special event at Hawthorne Elementary School in Ontario, Calif. Forty-eight preschool children received free dental screenings with brushing and flossing tips, a surprise visit by the Potter the Otter mascot, a reading of “Potter the Otter Visits the Dentist,” dental giveaways and more.

“Today's event with these preschool children showed just how critical it is to start good oral health habits as early as possible,” said Bonnie Flippin, program coordinator at San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's local oral health program Smile SBC. “We want to empower these kids to take brushing and flossing into their own hands, and

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we hope that by sprinkling in a little bit of fun like what we did today, will help them do just that.”

According to a survey by the Center for Oral Health and Smile SBC, over 60% of kindergarteners in San Bernardino County are affected by tooth decay, but it can be prevented. By prioritizing brushing, flossing, healthy eating and regular dental visits, parents not only protect their child's immediate health but also lay the foundation for lifelong, positive oral health habits.

In addition to finding a dentist, information about medical insurance enrollment and transportation assistance are also available on Smile SBC's "Find a Dentist" webpage. For more information on protecting your child's oral health and for other helpful resources, visit www.First5SanBernardino.org/OralHealth.

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