

Lake County Oral Health Access Council Press Release

For Immediate Release: February 11, 2011

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Lakeport and Lucerne Elementary Schools Celebrate “Give Kids a Smile Day”

Despite the threat of State budget cuts, Lake County’s First 5 Program, along with Lake County Public Health and other public and private partners, continue to provide oral health prevention services to local children.

February is **Children’s Dental Health Month**, a national event to raise awareness of the importance of good oral health as a vital component of good physical health. **“Give Kids a Smile Day”** is a chance for dental providers to offer free care to children who do not have access to dental care. Dental disease continues to be the number one disease affecting school-age children in the United States.

Lakeport and Lucerne Elementary Schools participated in this year’s “Give Kids a Smile Day” in a unique way. At both schools, kindergartners were asked to participate in an art contest with the theme, “What Makes a Healthy Smile?” Tom Jordan, Executive Director of First 5 Lake County, presented awards to the first, second and third place winners at each school on Thursday, February 3rd.

The winning artwork from each school was framed and presented to two of Lake County’s legislative representatives. Assemblyman Wes Chesbro was awarded Esteban Pardo’s “Going to the Dentist” drawing as part of the “Give Kids a Smile” event at Lucerne Elementary on Friday, February 4th, with Ruth Valenzuela, his representative, accepting on his behalf. This event included a free dental sealant clinic conducted by Dr. Doug Lewis, the Dental Director of MCHC’s Lakeside Health Clinic. Representative Mike Thompson received Megan Call’s drawing “My Healthy Smile” as part of the activities held at the Lakeside Dental Clinic on Saturday, February 5th. Mr. Jordan received a framed copy of “My Healthy Smile” drawn by grand prize winner Melanie Duarte from Lakeport Elementary School.

Mr. Jordan noted that as a result of the longstanding Dental Disease Prevention Program in Lake County, Healthy Start and the Children’s Oral Health Project, our children’s teeth are looking better than ever. Both the frequency and severity of reported caries has been slowly declining over the past 10 years. Funds for this effort have come from First 5 Lake County, which receives its funding from the Proposition 10 Initiative approved by California voters in 1998. However, Mr. Jordan cautioned that Governor Brown is proposing to redirect these funds to other state services in order to address the state budget deficit. The governor’s proposal will require the voters to once again decide in a June special election, if our children are our first priority.

Lake County’s Oral Health Access Council is a collaborative of partners including Healthy Start, Lake County Office of Education, MCHC’s Lakeside Dental Clinic, Clearlake Adventist Health Family Dental Clinic and the Tribal Health Dental Clinic, Lake County Public Health, WIC, California Primary Care Association and First 5 Lake County. The **“Give Kids a Smile Day”** events were organized by Missy Hill of Healthy Start, with special thanks to Michy Brown and the staff at Lucerne Elementary School.