



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Delta Dental Foundation Awards \$5,000 Smiles for Kids Grant to Reach Out and Read Carolinas**

**Fayetteville, NC (April 17, 2018)** –Reach out and Read Carolinas received a \$5,000 Smiles for Kids grant from the Delta Dental Foundation (DDF) to support the Reach Out and Read intervention in Cumberland County that will promote early dental care and literacy within well-child checkups.

These programs will combine efforts to improve oral health as well as literacy among Cumberland County children. Those who participate in the program will receive oral health reading materials, and their parents will receive guidance about the importance of good oral health practices and literacy. In 2016, only 24% of Cumberland County third-graders scored proficient or advanced in English Language Arts on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Since 80% of brain growth occurs before age three, these checkups are a crucial period to introduce the importance of the parent’s role in supporting their child’s language, literacy and oral health development.

“Our partnership with the Delta Dental Foundation is impacting over 5,500 young children at Reach Out and Read programs in Cumberland County,” said Reach Out and Read Carolinas Executive Director, Callee Boulware. “Through this strategic collaboration, we are maximizing the critical touchpoint of doctors and nurses and their access to parents and young children through regular well child checkups. Not only are doctors and nurses giving parents guidance about the importance of reading aloud regularly with young children, but they’re providing this messaging with children’s books promoting oral health and direction for families on building healthy routines.”

The Delta Dental Foundation focuses on ensuring that children and adults in North Carolina receive high-quality oral health education and dental care. The grant received by Reach Out and Read Carolinas is one of 19 grants totaling \$65,800 that DDF is donating to North Carolina oral health organizations and programs. Grant recipients were selected based on criteria that included the number of at-risk children served, the uniqueness of the program, the level of community involvement in the program and the ability to measure results.

“Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease today, and the 51 million hours of schooling that are lost each year due to dental issues contribute to poor literacy,” said Curt Ladig, president and CEO of Delta Dental of North Carolina. “The Delta Dental Foundation’s grant to Reach Out and Read Carolinas will help reach more underserved children and provide them with better access to the dental care they need to develop healthy behaviors and show up for school pain free and ready to read.”

**About Reach Out and Read Carolinas**

Reach Out and Read Carolinas is the regional coalition supporting over 450 clinical programs across North and South Carolina. The medically based literacy intervention spread from its foundation in Boston in 1989 and was replicated in communities across the country. Our mission in the Carolinas is to provide a medically-based literacy intervention for all children birth to 5 years of age, beginning with families living in poverty. The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. For more information, please visit [www.rorcarolinas.org](http://www.rorcarolinas.org). Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/rorcarolinas](https://www.facebook.com/rorcarolinas) and follow us on Twitter @rorcarolinas.

**About the Delta Dental Foundation**

The Delta Dental Foundation 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 foundation's goals are to support education and research for the advancement of dental science, and to promote the oral health of the public through education and service activities, particularly for those with special needs. For more information, visit [www.deltadentalnc.com](http://www.deltadentalnc.com).

**About Delta Dental of North Carolina**

Delta Dental of North Carolina is a nonprofit dental service corporation created in 1970 to provide dental benefits throughout the state. Its mission is to improve the oral health of the communities it serves. It does so by providing affordable access to oral health care with the largest network of providers, including two out of every three dentists, in North Carolina.

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