



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Carolina Nonprofits Receive Funding to Provide Free Dental Care & Education to Low Income, Homeless, At-Risk Children

*Virtual Event Awards Funding, Commemorates 10th Anniversary of Smiles for Kids
Remarks from CDC Foundation Chair & UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
Professor Dr. Leah Devlin, DDS*

RALEIGH, NC: The Delta Dental Foundation (DDF), the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of North Carolina (DDNC), today held a virtual event to award \$85,000 for oral health initiatives serving NC communities. The event, which commemorated the 10th anniversary of Smiles for Kids, a grant program that funds oral health education and services across North Carolina, featured remarks from CDC Foundation Chair & UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health Professor Dr. Leah Devlin, DDS.

“These Smiles for Kids grants are critically important in catalyzing partnerships, bringing additional resources to the table, and providing innovative approaches to improve oral health in North Carolina,” said Leah Devlin, CDC Foundation Chair & UNC Gillings School of Public Health Professor. “As a society, we don’t always realize that oral health is a part of total body health. The Smiles for Kids grants advance oral health care delivery and education to underserved children across the state, including urban and rural communities.”

Curt Ladig, President and CEO, initiated the program when he joined DDNC in 2010. Since then, DDF has invested more than \$510,000 through the program, which has touched the lives of more than 330,000 underserved children and families in the state. This year, there are 22 [grant recipients](#) spanning 15 counties across the state.

“When I joined Delta Dental of North Carolina 10 years ago, I learned that 37 percent of the children entering kindergarten have tooth decay, causing them to miss critical class instruction time,” said Mr. Ladig. “This was unacceptable. Today, I am thrilled to celebrate 10 years of Smiles for Kids because of the positive impact that it’s had on so many children across the state. Because at Delta Dental, we believe that everyone deserves a healthy smile.”

In 2019, an estimated 2.4 million North Carolinians struggled to get adequate dental care.¹ Residents in 98 of the state’s 100 counties live in a region designated by the federal government as a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area.² Smiles for Kids supports safety net dental clinics and North Carolina nonprofits, which provide critical dental services and education to local residents.

The event also featured remarks from two grant recipients, **Dr. Rebecca Sykes, Dental Director for Wake County Government**, and **Dawn Jolly, RDH, Assistant Director/Mobile Program Manager** for Wilkes Public Health Dental Clinic.

The full event is available to view here: <https://youtu.be/27Ks0JiG1qQ>

¹ Health Resources & Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

² Health Resources & Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

To view the full list of grant recipients, click here: <https://nc.deltadental.com/smilesforkids>

Through the Smiles for Kids program, the Delta Dental Foundation has been providing mini-grants to North Carolina nonprofit organizations to help fund dental education initiatives and programs designed to promote children's oral health, especially to those in underserved areas. In considering grants, the Delta Dental Foundation 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.

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

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