Bright Smiles, Bright Futures

A PROGRAM OF COLGATE-PALMOLIVE COMPANY
NEW YORK, NY

Create 100 million healthy smiles by 2010. This was the eight-year goal that Colgate-Palmolive Company set for its Bright Smiles, Bright Futures program. Not only did it meet that goal, it expects to meet it in 2009 — one year early. And the number of smiles keeps growing.

Bright Smiles, Bright Futures reaches nearly 2,100 children a day. The program’s eight mobile dental vans travel to urban and rural neighborhoods and underserved communities across the United States. The vans visit schools, fairs, festivals, annual events and religious centers. Dental professionals who come from local dental schools, dental offices and the National Dental Association donate their time and expertise.

“When we do it is important because oral health is directly linked to our overall health. People with diabetes are two times more likely to suffer from gum disease,” said Dawna Michelle Fields, national program manager. Direct mail and cards are sent to dental offices and the National Dental Association donate their time and expertise. Seattle, Washington. “Our greatest challenge is lack of access and awareness. We’d love to be able to reach more children,” said Fields, who kids have called the “tooth fairy.” Each child also gets a free dental health report card and kit. The kit has games, coupons and information they can share with their parents.

The program helps to close the gap so more kids are in school learning,” she said.

For 2009, the eight mobile vans are booked solid with scheduled visits, including a first-time outreach into Seattle, Washington. “Our greatest challenge is lack of access and awareness. We’d love to be able to reach out to more rural communities,” fields said.

The Bright Smiles, Bright Futures program is more than just the mobile van program. It also works to increase the number of African American students who study dental medicine by providing scholarships through a national partnership with the National Dental Association. It has developed an education curriculum for underserved children, since 1991. “We focus on prevention, education and awareness, but in a fun way,” said Fields, who kids have called the “tooth fairy.” Each child also gets a free dental health report card and kit. The kit has games, coupons and information they can share with their parents.

“We all need to mobilize around wellness initiatives.”

Health Tips

✔ Brush teeth and gums with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day.
✔ Floss your teeth daily.
✔ Limit the number of times you eat snacks each day.
✔ Visit the dentist regularly.