

## ***Smiles For Kids...By Dr. Paul Denzler, DDS***

It is said that a society can be judged on how it takes care of its children. With the new Lincoln Crossing Elementary School that opened this year, the 12 Bridges Library, and new sports fields at Foskett Ranch, our city of Lincoln is doing an admirable job.

There are, however, pockets of need in our All-American City that still need attention; childhood dental disease is a silent problem. According to a recent study in the five counties of Sacramento, Yolo, Amador, El Dorado, and Placer, 55% of children have untreated tooth decay. This problem is not just in our area, however. California currently ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in childhood dental care and nationwide 51 MILLION school hours are lost each year due to dental related problems.

The Sacramento area has been a leader in fighting this problem since 1991 when two dentists, Dr. Gerard Ortner and Dr. Don Rollofson founded the Smiles For Kids program. Since its humble beginnings, the program has grown to become the most successful program of its kind in the country. The purpose of the program is to locate and treat children that have 'fallen between the cracks' of our dental health system. The program is administered by the charitable arm of the Sacramento District Dental Society (SDDS). Dental and orthodontic treatment are performed at no cost on children whose families are not able to afford treatment, but also do not qualify for government sponsored programs. The program has treated almost 9,000 children for a total of \$5.6 million worth of donated treatment performed.

The program has three main components. The first is a screening at the local elementary school level. The second is Smiles For Kids Day in February, where children are seen for treatment. Finally, the Adopt-A-Kid program provides treatment throughout the year. All screenings and treatment is performed by volunteer dentists, staff, and others and all treatment is performed at no charge.

In Lincoln we entered our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual screening at the local elementary schools this past October. Sponsored locally by the Kiwanis Club and coordinated by our school district nurse and the SDDS, we have been able to screen hundreds of children and treat dozens in need. Children in need have come from every one of the elementary schools in our district, so none can be overlooked.

The personal rewards that come from involvement in a program like Smiles For Kids continues to be a highlight of my job. By all of us lending the occasional helping hand we can truly live up to the title of Lincoln, All-American City.

***Dr. Paul Denzler maintains a dental proactive in downtown Lincoln, Denzler Family Dentistry. For more information visit his website at [www.MyLincolnDentist.com](http://www.MyLincolnDentist.com), or call him at 916-645-2161.***