GKAS is the nation's leading charitable oral health program

The GKAS program in New Jersey is the culmination of the efforts of several different organizations under the direction of the New Jersey Dental Association. The entire dental community, both public and private sectors, comes together to ensure the delivery of care to thousands of children who otherwise may not be able to afford it.

Services rendered include hygiene instruction, cleanings, screenings, x-rays, fillings, extractions, fluoride treatments, oral health education and much more.

Volunteers work to ensure the program is fun and educational and that it gives many children a great first impression of visits to the dentist.

"A Healthy Smile on Every Child is the Goal of GKAS in NJ!"

NJDA New Jersey Dental Association

New Jersey Dental Association

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give kids a smile!
National Children's Dental Access Day

A collaborative effort of the dental community to help eliminate oral health disparities in New Jersey

www.njda.org/gkas
(888) 576-9278

NJDA New Jersey Dental Association

Give Kids a Smile!—
More than just a day

What is *Give Kids a Smile*?

Give Kids a Smile! (GKAS) is a national program modeled after the St. Louis, MO program of the same name. Once a year, on the first Friday in February, volunteers in the dental community give their time and services to deliver screenings and treatment to needy children age 12 and under, absolutely free.

In New Jersey, thousands of children each year take part in the program at more than 80 locations in almost every county in the state. More than 1,100 volunteers make the program happen in urban, suburban and rural settings since it began in 2003.

Through the cooperation of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, the New Jersey Dental Hygienists' Association and the New Jersey Dental Assistants' Association, the volunteers in New Jersey make GKAS a true team effort.

Though this one day receives much attention, dentists regularly treat patients free of charge, year-round, without fanfare or media attention.

A Tragedy That's Preventable

Thousands of children live in New Jersey with persistent, distracting pain, the inability to chew and eat properly and disfiguring decay and swelling. The crisis is staggering:

- **More than 1/3 of all children in the U.S. have no dental insurance**
- **Uninsured children are 2.5 times less likely to receive dental care than insured children**
- **80% of tooth decay in the U.S. is suffered by 25% of the children**
- **51 million school hours are lost each year to untreated cavities**
- **Economic disadvantage is the single best predictor of tooth decay in children**
- **NJ ranks 49th of 50 states in the number of people who have access to fluoridated community water supplies**

Tooth decay (or cavities) is the #1 chronic childhood disease in America and is largely preventable. It is five times more prevalent than asthma, and disproportionately affects children from low-income families.

The good news is that—with periodic oral healthcare, good oral hygiene and fluoridated water—**tooth decay is preventable**.

How Can Parents and Children Take Advantage of GKAS?

School nurses around the state are notified about the program and are provided a list of the participating dental offices months in advance of the February date. They, in turn, notify parents about the program in December and January. Information on the program is also available online at www.njda.org/gkas or via the program's hotline at (877) 576-9278 60 days prior to the event.

Those looking to volunteer should contact the local participating dental offices to inquire about opportunities.

It is important for community leaders, parents, guardians and school nurses to understand that volunteerism is not a sustainable healthcare delivery model. And, although the GKAS program is an annual event, parents should establish a dental home at a local dental office or dental clinic for their children. The New Jersey Dental Association offers an online find-a-dentist resource at www.njda.org.