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Board Eligible Pediatric Dentist

Give Kids a Smile!

BY TINA MERHOFF

It may have looked like a typical day at **Dr. Tina Merhoff & Associates Pediatric Dentistry** office with the jungle-themed waiting area packed with children at play. But this particular day had special significance to the staff and families. It was "Give Kids a Smile Day."

Every February, "Dr. Tina" and her staff look forward to the **Give Kids a Smile** national campaign endorsed by the American Dental Association and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry to bring awareness of the importance of oral health as well as provide dental care to children who otherwise might not receive treatment. The entire pediatric dental team gladly volunteers their time and provides complimentary dental care to young patients who have been referred through local pediatricians, Head Start programs, and other area organizations. They also dedicate the month of February to visiting various preschool and elementary schools to present educational programs to children and families across Winston-Salem.



During this year's event, held Friday February 22nd, the office treated more than 20 children and provided procedures including: routine cleanings, dental examinations, radiographs, root



A quick prayer time kicks off Give Kids a Smile Day.



The tooth fairy reads to guests during Give Kids a Smile Day.

canal therapy, pulpotomies, and crowns. Our mission was to restore each child's complete oral health, and Give Kids a Smile. Not only did the children receive excellent care, but also toothbrushes and other goodies to take home; the staff enjoyed providing education on the importance of dental hygiene. "Teaching children to care for their smile is powerful. Taking the time with these children and their families can make a lifelong impression," commented the 3 full time Registered Dental Hygienists, Ashley McBride, Denna Rominger, and Alex Sparks.

For Dr. Tina, "Helping the underserved children in the community is especially meaningful to me. As a young child who benefited from a Head Start program, when these children come into our office, I truly see myself. I understand how much it means to have someone show love and compassionately care to create a healthy smile."

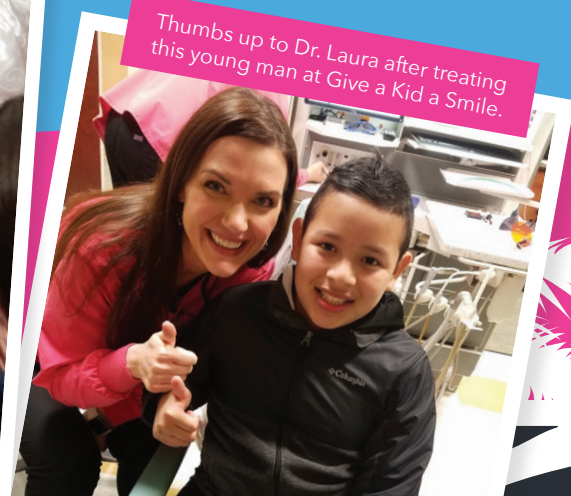
The team at Merhoff and Associates work hard to make the Give Kids a Smile event a success each year, it is only a small part of their commitment to the community. "Our goal is to inspire and empower each child with the tools they need to maintain a healthy smile for a lifetime," stated Dr. Melissa Blake. The dental team also organizes and presents educational outreach programs throughout the year for pre-K through elementary school students as a way to reach more children. Dr. Laura Johnson reiterates, "We give kids a smile every day."



Our tooth fairy visits schools.



Abbie, the tooth fairy, brought magic and comfort everywhere.



Thumbs up to Dr. Laura after treating this young man at Give a Kid a Smile.



Dr. Melissa giving this sweet girl a smile.



Some of Dr. Tina's inspiration for helping children started as a young dental student at the University of Tennessee. "I volunteered at the pediatric dentistry department and fell in love with the children right away. I saw this as a way I could really make a difference in the lives of children. Helping children have smiles they're proud of gives them so much more confidence as they start school and make new friends. It also impacts how they interact with others as they grow and mature. When they are proud of their smile, they are proud to share their smile with others," says Dr. Tina.

The entire team at Merhoff and Associates reflects the special nature of treating young patients. Every step is taken to be welcoming and stress-free as possible. Each corner of the office includes playful kid-sized furniture, and the equipment is designed for optimum comfort. From a warm hello at the door and special kid-sized door to the stuffed animals that help demonstrate proper brushing, every element of a patient's visit is considered.

A child's first dental visit can set the tone for all visits to follow. By age one, every child should have an established dental home where preventative care can be initiated early in life as recommended by The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). It is our mission to care for every child with excellence as if they were our own. We know a child needs to feel comforted and safe. His or her parents need to feel the same. We'll do a complete dental exam, nutritional assessment, and an overall health review. We'll discuss preventive care, hygiene education, and any special needs for each individual patient. But we'll do it all with a calm, gentle nature, with patience and understanding, a goodie bag - and a hug. Every time we are able to help a child walk out of our office with a confident smile, it puts a smile on our faces, too.



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