

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

MORE THAN 1,000 STUDENTS TO RECEIVE DENTAL EXAMS FOR GIVE KIDS A SMILE DAY

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JACKSON, Miss. – More than 1,000 Jackson Public Schools elementary students are set to receive free preventive dental care from the University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Dentistry on Feb. 11 as part of the national Give Kids a Smile Day, an annual event sponsored by the American Dental Association.

Students, residents and faculty with the school will provide the services, along with help from the School of Health Related Professions' Dental Hygiene and Physical Therapy programs, through a partnership with the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation. The day will mark the dentistry school's ninth year to participate in the event since it was established by the ADA in 2002. Winter weather forced the cancellation of last year's event.

This year, an estimated 1,030 children from Johnson, Smith and Galloway Elementary Schools in Jackson, from prekindergarten through fifth grades, will receive the exams. Prekindergarten, kindergarten and exceptional education students will visit a 10-chair clinic at the medical mall, while the rest will visit the School of Dentistry. All students will receive an exam, a cleaning and if there's no visible decay, dental hygiene students will provide sealants. While awaiting their turn in the dentist's chair, Physical therapy students will entertain the students with games and activities in the Student Union gymnasium and at the medical mall.

The event aims to provide oral health education as well as preventive care to low-income children with little access to care. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly one in four children between 2 and 11 years old have untreated cavities.

"This event occurs to bring awareness that February is National Children's Dental Health Month and to remind children and their families that the most common chronic illness of children is tooth decay," said Dr. Neva Eklund, chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Community Oral Health. "But the good news is that tooth decay can be prevented with regular visits to the dentist, proper oral hygiene and preventive measures like water fluoridation and application of preventive dental sealants."

The Give Kids a Smile activities are expected to run from 8:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Dr. Gary Reeves, interim dean of the School of Dentistry, said the collaboration also receives support from Dental Hygiene, Medicine, Physical Therapy, community colleges and public health agencies, private dentists, community and corporate sponsors include Henry Schein, Colgate-Palmolive, P&G, Crest Oral B, Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals, Johnson & Johnson Healthcare, Ultradent, NE Green & Associates, VOCO, Robert Ellis & Associates, Patterson Dental, Premier Dental, Benco Dental, Business Interiors, Cellular South, Oral Oncology & Biobehavioral Medicine, Sunbelt Construction, AXA Advisors, University Dentists and Coca-Cola.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.