
Good News Department

100 Million Smiles And Counting

(NAPSA)—As part of its ongoing national education program, *Bright Smiles, Bright Futures*®, Colgate-Palmolive Company announced that it has reached 100 million children in the United States, providing free dental screenings, oral health education and treatment referrals. The company celebrated the milestone recently with a brush-a-thon in midtown Manhattan, with over 170 children from P.S. 161 Juan Ponce De Leon School in the Bronx, New York and actress and musician Miranda Cosgrove, star of the Emmy-nominated television series “iCarly.”

Colgate set the ambitious “100 Million Smiles” goal in the U.S. in 2002 to help reduce the epidemic of oral disease in urban and rural areas where children are especially at risk. *Bright Smiles, Bright Futures*, which began in 1991, uses mobile dental vans staffed with volunteer dentists to conduct free dental screenings, distribute multicultural educational materials and samples, and educate children and their families about the importance of maintaining good oral health.

The program also partners with the World Health Organization—the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations—Family Dollar Stores, dental and education professionals, and community groups to reach more children and raise awareness of the association between oral health and overall health.

Getting children to develop good brushing habits early is critical. According to the U.S. Surgeon General’s report *Oral Health in America*, oral disease remains a national epidemic, with tooth decay now being the single most common chronic childhood disease among 5- to 17-year-olds—more common than asthma or hay fever.



Musician and actress Miranda Cosgrove helped raise awareness about the importance of maintaining good oral health.

During the event, actress and musician Miranda Cosgrove, a role model for young people, emphasized the importance of good oral care, leading the students in a celebratory brush-a-thon. “It is unfortunate that there are millions of people who can’t get to or can’t afford to go to the dentist, which is why efforts like this are so important,” Cosgrove said. “Children are busy and distracted and don’t realize how important it is to practice good dental habits or what maintaining them can mean in terms of their overall health. I am hoping that getting the message out will help encourage more kids to brush their teeth and go to the dentist.”

“Today, we are celebrating a terrific milestone,” Dr. Marsha Butler, Colgate’s Vice President, Global Oral Health and Professional Relations, told brush-a-thon participants, “but there is still much work to be done in terms of eradicating oral health disease. Tomorrow, we will be back in the communities, in our dental vans, raising awareness and helping to meet the oral health challenges facing us all.”

For more information on *Bright Smiles, Bright Futures* or Colgate’s mobile dental van initiative, please visit www.colgatebsbf.com or call (212) 310-2638.