

Fighting The Good Fight For Oral Health

(NAPSA)—Here's something to smile about. According to a recent Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health in America, proper preventive oral health care can potentially reduce the risk of heart disease, oral cancer, diabetes and premature, low-birth-weight babies.

However, it's estimated that more than 97 million Americans are without an annual dental visit and more than 150 million Americans, 55 percent of the population, have no dental insurance.

Working to solve the access crisis, dental hygienists from across the country are stepping in to educate and deliver oral health care to those in need. Every year thousands of dental hygienists donate their personal time and money to reach out to the community, all in the spirit of providing access to oral care education.

"As a registered dental hygienist, I feel it is incumbent upon me to educate all Americans, children and adults, on the importance of proper oral health," said Heather Lisk, RDH. "A healthy smile on any patient is a positive future for oral care."

The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) and Oral-B, a worldwide leader in oral care, are proud to announce the formation of a new community outreach program called Smiles Within Reach™. The program is developed to support dental hygienists and public health officials with their outreach efforts.

"The access issue has been central to ADHA's mission for 80 years," said Tammi O. Byrd, RDH, ADHA president. "Smiles Within Reach represents ADHA's ongoing commitment to educating communities about oral health, the dental hygiene profession and the state of the nation's public health."

Smiles Within Reach is a one-of-a-kind educational program for licensed dental hygienists and the communities in which they work. In conjunction with institutions such as schools, clinics, community centers and correctional facilities, dental hygienists provide a nationwide resource for proper oral care education. The program offers participating dental hygien-

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ists free materials including patient education brochures, fact sheets and an event-planning checklist, as well as discounts on Oral-B products in hopes to build community awareness of proper tooth and gum care.

"Because some individuals don't have access to dental offices, teams of hygienists for example, in cooperation with Smiles Within Reach, are working with local adult centers to educate mentally challenged patients on the proper way to maintain their teeth and gums," said Tonya Ray, RDH and Oral-B Laboratories National Manager of Professional Education. "We're making strides and providing smiles to a specific group that would not necessarily have access to proper oral health treatments."

ADHA is the largest national organization representing the professional interests of more than 120,000 dental hygienists across the country.

For more information about ADHA, please visit www.adha.org. Dental professionals who would like more information about Smiles Within Reach may visit the Web site at www.smileswithinreach.org.