NCOHF grants support community-based children’s care

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

The money donated to National Children’s Oral Health Foundation: America’s Toothfairy is being put to good use. NCOHF recently announced it has awarded grants totaling $109,050 to eight not-for-profit community, university and hospital-based dental programs nationwide.

The grants are as follows:
- Catholic Healthcare West, Chandler, Ariz., $15,000
- Community Oral Health Services, Salinas, Calif., $15,000
- Sonrisas Community Dental Center, Half Moon Bay, Calif., $9,050
- The Children’s Dental Center, Inglewood, Calif., $15,000
- The Gary Center, La Habra, Calif., $10,000
- Indiana University School of Dentistry, Indianapolis, $15,000
- Community Dentistry on Wheels, Largo, Md., $15,000
- A Fluoride Connection Non Profit Corp., Madison, Wis., $15,000

According to the NCOHF, the grant recipients are members of the growing affiliate network delivering comprehensive preventive, restorative and education.

Economic hardship takes toll on teeth

Is it true that people postpone or forgo dental treatment in difficult economic times? According to one recent survey of dental practitioners, the answer is, unfortunately, yes. The Chicago Dental Society conducted a poll of 250 members to learn more about their opinions on current trends, dental topics and more. According to the survey, the effects of the recession on the dental industry have worsened over the last year.

More than 90 percent of dentists surveyed said their clients are putting off cosmetic procedures, the Chicago Dental Society reported. In addition, more than 75 percent of
‘More should be done to improve children’s oral health,’ AGD says

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According to the Academy of General Dentistry, more needs to be done to improve children’s oral health as oral diseases negatively impact learning, interfere with eating and contribute to poor self-esteem.

AGD President David F. Halpern, DMD, FAGD, testified in the nation’s capital recently during the first meeting of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on Oral Health Initiative. During his testimony, Halpern emphasized access to care and oral health literacy.

“Public schools have played a critical role in keeping our children healthy,” Halpern said. “Schools routinely hold programs to ensure health, frequently see properly and are free from other diseases. However, dental diseases, the most prevalent of all, do not receive the same attention.”

Halpern asked the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to consider mandating oral health programs in all public schools. Additionally, Halpern expressed his support for initiatives that ensure that minority and rural populations receive quality oral health care services from dentists. Such initiatives, he said, could include loan repayment programs to dentists working in community health and underserved settings, the restoration of Title VII, and patient transportation and non-dental social services programs.

Halpern also spoke about the importance of shifting from a treatment-based concept of medicine to one based on prevention. He stated that this transformation can be achieved by assisting patients, physicians and communities to become oral health literate.

“Yes, the HHS must continue its water fluoridation programs as a fallback to maintain a minimal level of oral health in communities, but this is not nearly sufficient — utilization through greater oral health literacy is mandatory,” Halpern said.

Halpern also expressed his disappointment over the lack of a practicing private-practice dentist on the committee and encouraged the committee to reconsider appointing a general dentist from the private-practice community.

all oral-health programs to children from vulnerable populations.

Through continued support from financial and product contributions, as well as technical resources, the affiliate network has reached more than 1 million children since 2006, NCOHF said.

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“We work in an area that has many rural poor farm families. Many don’t qualify for the state-offered dental health plan, and as a result our organization receives very little reimbursement from the state program,” said Kathleen Traut, executive director of A Fluoride Connection.

“We won’t turn any child away if they are uninsured or otherwise aren’t on the program, we simply get paid less. Funding from America’s Toothfairy has eased our financial worries in providing vital services for the little ones who won’t otherwise have any dental experiences at all. It is gratifying to share such a passion for children’s oral health with America’s Toothfairy.”

dentists said their patients are putting off needed dental care and visits for preventative dental care are also on the decline according to more than half of dentists.

The survey also revealed that nearly 75 percent of dentists surveyed said their patients are reporting increased stress in their lives, and 65 percent of dentists are seeing an increase in jaw clenching and teeth grinding among their patients, signs that stress may be taking its toll on the mouth.

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