



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Delta Dental donates \$62 million to improve nation's oral health *Donations aid uninsured children, help alleviate dentist shortage*

Oak Brook, Ill. (January 5, 2009) -- Delta Dental Plans Association released its *2008 Community Benefit Annual Report*, which shows that Delta Dental's 39 member companies donated more than \$62 million in 2007 to support community benefit initiatives that advance and promote oral health – up from \$58 million the previous year. Public benefit support is up more than 290 percent from 2003's \$15.8 million total.

“We are proud of our member companies’ growing commitment to improving the quality of life in the communities we serve,” says Kim Volk, president and CEO of Delta Dental Plans Association. “Through community outreach, education and services, we’re helping fight dental disease and promoting our belief that everyone deserves good oral health.”

Each of Delta Dental's 39 independent member companies and their affiliated foundations work actively within their communities to create and support programs that advance solutions for better oral health. The programs focus on expanding access to care for the uninsured and underinsured, alleviating the nation's growing dentist shortage, preventing dental disease and advancing dental science.

Expanding Care for Children

Children covered by Medicaid are much less likely to receive dental care than children with private health insurance, according to a report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). In 2005, an estimated 6.5 million Medicaid eligible children age 2 through 18 suffered from untreated tooth decay.¹

To narrow the gap between children who need and receive dental care, Delta Dental's member companies provide free care to uninsured and underinsured children. Free care includes regular dental check-ups, badly needed treatment, oral health education and even transportation to and from dental appointments.

For example, Delta Dental of Colorado's Foundation provides free care year-round to uninsured children through its Smile-a-Bration program. And, the Delta Dental Dakota Smiles Mobile Dental Program brings oral health services to children from limited-income families who would not otherwise have access to needed dental care.

Also, through a partnership with the National Head Start Association, Delta Dental helped treat more than 3,816 uninsured children in 2008.

Alleviating the Nation's Growing Dentist Shortage

There are more than 3,700 geographical locations across the country without enough dental health professionals, according to the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). In fact, an estimated 46 million Americans are living in identified Dental Health Profession Shortage Areas and 9,000 additional dentists are needed to fill this gap in care.²

Delta Dental's member companies support programs that encourage dentists to practice in shortage areas and encourage college students to choose a career in dentistry. The cost of dental school can be a great burden for students and continues to rise, so Delta Dental's member companies help alleviate the burden with loan repayment programs, scholarships and grants.

For instance, 88 of Iowa's 99 counties are designated dentist shortage areas. To help, Delta Dental of Iowa awards three \$50,000 loan repayment grants annually to dentists who agree to practice in one of the shortage areas and deliver 35 percent of patient services to underserved populations.

These are just few examples of what Delta Dental's member companies are doing to improve oral health in their communities. To view the *2008 Community Benefit Annual Report* and learn more about what Delta Dental is doing in your community, go to www.deltadental.com.

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association (www.deltadental.com) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 51 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Extent of Dental Disease in Children Has Not Decreased, and Millions Are Estimated to Have Untreated Tooth Decay* (GAO-08-1121), 2008.

² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration