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Delta Dental Foundation Awarded \$11,500 in Smiles for Kids Grants to Reach Out and Read Carolinas Since 2016

The grants support an initiative to combine early dental care and literacy at well-child checkups.

Fayetteville, NC (June 27, 2019) – This year, Reach out and Read Carolinas received a \$4,000 Smiles for Kids grant from the Delta Dental Foundation (DDF) to support the Reach Out and Read intervention in Cumberland County that will promote early dental care and literacy within well-child checkups.

These programs will combine efforts to improve oral health as well as literacy among Cumberland County children. Those who participate in the program will receive oral health reading materials, and their parents will receive guidance about the importance of good oral health practices and literacy. In 2016, only 24% of Cumberland County third-graders scored proficient or advanced in English Language Arts on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Since 80% of brain growth occurs before age three, these checkups are a crucial period to introduce the importance of the parent's role in supporting their child's language, literacy and oral health development.

"The opportunity to partner with the Delta Dental Foundation maximizes the touchpoint of primary care providers with young children and their families, and is critical to the whole health and well-being of children in Cumberland County," said Reach Out and Read Carolinas Executive Director, Callee Boulware. "Through our strategic collaboration, families receive guidance to help them build healthy daily routines. This partnership helps young children have good oral hygiene and healthy smiles. Additionally, this investment allows Reach Out and Read providers to improve the quality of preventative oral health delivery and services to young children."

The Delta Dental Foundation focuses on ensuring that children and adults in North Carolina receive high-quality oral health education and dental care. The grant received by Reach Out and Read Carolinas is one of 19 grants totaling \$70,000 that DDF is donating to North Carolina oral health organizations and programs in 2019. Grant recipients were selected based on criteria that included the number of at-risk children served, the uniqueness of the program, the level of community involvement in the program and the ability to measure results. This is the third year that Reach Out and Read Carolinas has been awarded a Smiles for Kids grant, totaling \$11,500 since 2016.

"Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease today, and the 51 million hours of schooling that are lost each year due to dental issues contribute to poor literacy," said Curt Ladig, president and CEO of Delta Dental of North Carolina. "The Delta Dental Foundation's grant to Reach Out and Read Carolinas will help reach more underserved children and provide them with better access to

the dental care they need to develop healthy behaviors and show up for school pain free and ready to read.”

About Reach Out and Read Carolinas

Reach Out and Read Carolinas is the regional coalition supporting over 450 clinical programs across North and South Carolina. The medically based literacy intervention spread from its foundation in Boston in 1989 and was replicated in communities across the country. Our mission in the Carolinas is to provide a medically-based literacy intervention for all children birth to 5 years of age, beginning with families living in poverty. The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. For more information, please visit www.rorcarolinas.org. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/rorcarolinas and follow us on Twitter @rorcarolinas.

About the Delta Dental Foundation

The Delta Dental Foundation is a nonprofit, charitable organization established in 1980, which serves as the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and North Carolina. The foundation’s goals are to support education and research for the advancement of dental science, and to promote the oral health of the public through education and service activities, particularly for those with special needs. For more information, visit www.deltadentalinc.com.

About Delta Dental of North Carolina

Delta Dental of North Carolina is a nonprofit dental service corporation created in 1970 to provide dental benefits throughout the state. Its mission is to improve the oral health of the communities it serves. It does so by providing affordable access to oral health care with the largest network of providers, including two out of every three dentists, in North Carolina.

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