



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**United Way Receives Smiles Across America® Grant from Oral Health America**  
*National and Regional Partners Collaborate to Bring School-based Dental Services to Alachua County Children*

Gainesville, Fla., October 7, 2010 – The University of Florida College of Dentistry, in conjunction with Oral Health America's (OHA) signature program, Smiles Across America® (SAA), announce a new \$20,000 grant award today to the United Way of North Central Florida at an event at M.K. Rawlings Elementary School to help raise awareness for oral disease prevention in Alachua County. The partnership will provide school-based and school linked dental services to four Alachua County elementary and middle schools and Head Start with plans to expand the program over the next several years. The SAA award is made possible through a grant from the Patterson Foundation to OHA.

“If we want our children to be in school, ready to learn, communities have a vested interest in working in partnership with dental care providers to ensure care and teach good habits that will last a lifetime and keep teeth and mouths healthy,” says Beth Truett, President and CEO, OHA. “Community-wide commitment to this issue in Alachua County makes it an ideal site for a pilot program, and we are honored to support your work.”

The pilot program will provide dental sealant and education to 120 second graders at Rawlings and Metcalfe elementary schools, 491 sixth graders at Bishop and Lincoln middle schools and 1,251 Head Start students. All participants will be required to have signed permission slips from parents.

“This project is a prime example of how United Way brings together the individuals and organizations with the passion, expertise and resources needed to get things done,” said United Way of North Central Florida President and CEO Karen Bricklemyer. “There are too many partners to list, many of them new, but they all have one thing in common, an interest in helping children.”

Tooth decay is the number one chronic childhood disease in the U.S., and children lose over 51 million school hours each year due to dental related illness.<sup>1</sup> According to a public opinion survey commissioned by OHA, and sponsored by Oral Healthcare Can't Wait and Plackers, two-thirds (65%) of parents are looking to schools to help reinforce the importance of oral health, saying it is extremely or very important for schools to teach children about taking care of their teeth. At school, just four in ten (39%) children report learning about oral or dental health in the past year.<sup>2</sup>

“With deferred preventive dental care even more prevalent in today's challenging economic circumstances, what better time to help raise awareness about good oral health,” said Ann Gugino, Oral Health America Board Member and Vice President of Finance and Operations at Patterson Dental.

Plackers® generously provided dental flossers to every child at the M.K. Rawlings Elementary School to show their commitment to oral health education in schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the U.S. Surgeon General

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

SAA is a signature program created by Oral Health America, a national non-profit organization dedicated to changing lives by connecting communities with resources to increase access to care, education and advocacy. SAA improves the health of elementary school students by supporting oral disease prevention services in school-based or school-linked settings, and demonstrating to communities that healthy mouths are integral to overall health. For more information, visit <http://www.oralhealthamerica.org>.

The Patterson Foundation is a private grant-making foundation. Foundation resources are focused on human services and education programs related to oral health, animal health, and occupational and physical rehabilitation. For more information, visit <http://www.pattersonfoundation.net>.

United Way of North Central Florida is a locally governed organization dedicated to leading the community to focus on issues and build solutions that improve lives. United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. Working to advance the common good by focusing on: education, income and health. For more information about United Way of North Central Florida, please visit: [www.unitedwayncfl.org](http://www.unitedwayncfl.org).

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