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SMILES ACROSS AMERICA EXPANDS TO BRING NEEDED ORAL HEALTH CARE TO MONTANA CHILDREN

Montana Dental Association Sealants for Smiles! Joins School-Based Dental Program

CHICAGO, May 2, 2014 — Smiles Across America® (SAA), an Oral Health America (OHA) program, is pleased to welcome the Montana Dental Association Sealants for Smiles! to the SAA network. This is part of an ongoing commitment by OHA to help fight tooth decay among our nation’s youth.

"The Montana Dental Association Sealants for Smiles! provides care to underserved children of Montana, many of whom do not have other access to dental care. We are honored to welcome this worthy program to the SAA family and help them expand to reach even more children," said OHA President and CEO Beth Truett.

Tooth decay is one of the most prevalent healthcare issues for children, with over 51 million school hours lost each year due to dental problems. In the state of Montana, many children live in areas with limited access to dental care, with 60 percent of low-income third graders residing 400 miles from the nearest pediatric dentist.

Sealants for Smiles! provides sealants and screenings to Montana students in school-based settings. The SAA grant will support the Sealants for Smiles! Program Expansion Project, which will allow the program to recruit additional volunteers, expand current relationships with current program partners, and promote program participation to school administrators, caregivers, and the public. The program plans to provide services to 5,670 children in 58 elementary schools in rural and frontier Montana during the current school year.

“We’re thrilled to have Oral Health America add their support to the important work Sealants for Smiles! is doing for Montana children,” said Dr. Jane Gillette, Bozeman dentist and director of Sealants for Smiles!. “In just three years, this charitable public health project, developed by Montana dental professionals, has exploded into the most significant and successful children’s dental health program in the state. The generous grant provided by Oral Health America will help us achieve further expansion as we work toward our goal of providing vital preventative dental care, including dental sealants, to every child in Montana who needs this care.”

OHA will formally welcome the Montana Dental Association Sealants for Smiles! to SAA with a celebration event on May 2 ahead of the Montana Dental Association’s 111th Annual Meeting at Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula. Senator John Walsh (D-MT) and representatives from the Montana Dental Association, Bonner Elementary School, Sealants for Smiles! and Oral Health America will be in attendance.

SAA, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, supports oral health programs across the country through grant funding, technical assistance in the areas of communications and coalition building, and product donations. Each year, SAA reaches more than 440,000 children and distributes more than 500,000 units of donated dental product.

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ABOUT ORAL HEALTH AMERICA
OHA's mission is to change lives by connecting communities with resources to increase access to oral health care, education and advocacy for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. Through Smiles Across America®, which serves 400,000 children annually, the Wisdom Tooth Project™, which reaches tens of thousands of older adults, and the Campaign for Oral Health Equity, which prioritizes oral health alongside other chronic diseases, OHA provides needed oral health care and education, helping Americans of all ages to have a healthy mouth and understand the importance of oral health for overall health. For more information about Oral Health America, please visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.

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