



For Immediate Release: 1-9-19

TIME TO SMILE AGAIN - EBLEN SEALANT PROGRAM BEGINS 20TH YEAR

(Asheville, NC) If you happen to see a lot of bright and healthy smiles beaming from elementary school children in our community these past nineteen years, chances are one reason they are smiling is that they have a lot less cavities thanks to the Eblen Dental Sealant Partnership.

Beginning this Friday, January 11th hundreds of second graders will once again have a reason to smile as the Eblen Dental Sealant Partnership begins its 20th year on the campus of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College.

The program will be held every Friday through the end of May, and is open to all second graders in Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools at no cost to the children, their families or the schools. Through this innovative partnership, hundreds of children will be taking their first steps to a life of dental health thanks to this unique community outreach.

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College will once again host the Eblen Dental Sealant Partnership in their Dental Clinic and has made the program a part of their curriculum as they offer their students the hands on training as part of their clinic days.

“The Eblen Sealant Partnership has become an important and anticipated program that is a vital and remarkable part of our community,” states Orthodontist Dr. Keith Black, Eblen board member and founder of the sealant partnership.

“Eblen Charities has developed a number of dental programs and partnerships along with the Buncombe County Dental Society to assist children with emergency dental needs. So much of dental health is about prevention and avoiding decay that can lead to more serious problems. The sealant program helps provide that prevention.”

In partnership with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Buncombe County Health and Human Services, The Buncombe County Dental Society, area dental hygienists and dental assistants, Patterson Dental Supply, Buncombe County and Asheville City Schools, the Dental Sealant Program provides a healthier and brighter dental future for many children whose family may not have been able to afford to provide the sealants themselves.

The cost of the program last year would have been exceeded \$100,000 if paid for at regular retail prices. Thanks to this unique partnership, the cost was a little more than \$500. The Dental Sealant Program is open to all second-graders in the Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools who are in need of sealants and whose molars are ready and show no decay. There is no financial eligibility to be able to receive the sealants.

Through this partnership, costs have been drastically reduced from \$150 per tooth to 18 cents per tooth. The Eblen Dental Sealant Program has been honored with regional and national awards including the GlaxoSmithKline Child Health Recognition award and the National Linkages Award.

We also owe a deep gratitude to our local dentists who kindly supply their time and talents to make this unique partnership a success. Through the years supporters have included: Dr. Doug Phillips, Dr. Wendy Willoughby, Dr. Bill Chambers, Dr. Teresa Bare, Dr. Dennis Campbell, Dr. Tim Gillespie, Dr. Hope Xenakis, Dr. Matt Stacey, Dr. Barbara Bowman-Hensley, Dr. Woody Bollinger, Dr. Robert Merrill, Dr. Jenny Jackson, Dr. Keith Black, Dr. Perry Stamatiades, Dr. Carole Robinson, Dr. Cannon, Dr. Deborah Anders, Dr. Barry Hinderstein, Dr. Barry Duncan, and many other dentists and their staffs for making this program possible year after year.

We are still looking for additional volunteer dentists, staff, hygienists, and dental assistants to join us this year in providing this invaluable service to the children in our community. If you would like to help or for more information on the Eblen Dental Sealant Partnership, please contact Susan Riddle at the Eblen Charities at 828-255-3066 ext. 11 or via email at sriddle@eblencharities.org.

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