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Contacts:

Contacts:

Leslie Capo, LSU Health New Orleans
504.568.4806; 504.452.9166 (cell)
Paul Amundsen, HSHC
312.337.2160; 312.800.3231

Putting on PJs to Fight Tooth Decay

Pajama Party Celebrates Ideas that Have Made Dental Care Accessible for More Children

January 25, 2017, New Orleans, LA – Today, jammies were the uniform of choice in the battle to end childhood cavities as dozens of children enjoyed a pajama party at LSU Health New Orleans After-Hours Pediatric Dental Clinic to celebrate the ability to go to the dentist.

The pajama party drew attention to the need for early dental care and recognized two concepts—the Dental Home and after-hours pediatric dental care—that make it possible for more children, regardless of their financial means, to receive early and ongoing dental care.

The event was co-hosted by LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry and Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children: The Foundation of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (HSHC), a national organization that supports community programs that expand access to care for all children, regardless of the family’s financial situation. LSU Health New Orleans After-hours Pediatric Dental Clinic opened recently with support from a \$37,156.83 grant from HSHC.

Dental students and pediatric dental residents, under faculty supervision, treat children and adolescents by appointment in the clinic on the LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry campus, 1100 Florida Avenue. Services include examinations, x-rays, cleanings and sealants, as well as restorative services (fillings, crowns, pulp therapy, and space maintenance) and extractions. The clinic is open two evenings a month, from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. and one Saturday per month, from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Appointments can be made by calling 504-941-8201. The clinic will accept Medicaid and LaCHIP, and others can benefit from the discounted care under the school’s student fee schedule.

“While dental disease is preventable, many working families cannot take off from work or take children out of school to go the dentist,” notes Dr. Henry Gremillion, Dean of LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry. “By offering after-hours care, we hope to remove those barriers to dental care and establish a dental home for children of the Greater New Orleans community.”

HSHC helps organizations, like LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry, create Dental Homes for children who would otherwise not be able to afford dental care. At a Dental Home, children receive consistent, compassionate dental care during childhood and through the teen years.

“At a Dental Home, the door is open to all children to help them on their way to a lifetime of good oral health,” said Dr. Neophytos L. Savide, President of HSHC. “Offering dental services in the evening hours is an innovative approach that has increased access to care for even more of our most vulnerable children.”

Tooth decay is on the rise among low-income populations

Despite the fact that dental disease is preventable, tooth decay is increasing and has become epidemic among the youngest children in the US. Children among low-income and minority families have a higher incidence of oral health issues including a rapid form of tooth decay, known as early childhood caries (ECC).

Financial, time and other constraints limit access to care. Many low-income families do not have dental insurance or money to pay out-of-pocket for dental visits. In addition, many working parents are unable to take time off during the day to take their children to the dentist.

“By reducing barriers to care, LSU Health New Orleans School of Dentistry and HSHC hope to reduce the incidence of childhood cavities and increase the number of healthy smiles in the community,” concluded Dr. Savide.

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans educates Louisiana’s health care professionals. The state’s most comprehensive health sciences university, LSU Health New Orleans includes a School of Medicine, the state’s only School of Dentistry, Louisiana’s only public School of Public Health, and Schools of Allied Health Professions, Nursing, and Graduate Studies. LSU Health New Orleans faculty take care of patients in public and private hospitals and clinics throughout the region. In the vanguard of biosciences research in a number of areas in a worldwide arena, the LSU Health New Orleans research enterprise generates jobs and enormous economic impact. LSU Health New Orleans faculty have made lifesaving discoveries and continue to work to prevent, advance treatment, or cure disease. To learn more, visit <http://www.lsuhs.edu>, <http://www.twitter.com/LSUHealthNO> or <http://www.facebook.com/LSUHSC>.

Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children is the charitable arm of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), the nation's leading association of dental specialists committed to optimal oral health for all children. HSHC supports community-based initiatives providing Dental Homes to children from families that cannot afford dental care. Since 2010, HSHC has issued more than \$4 million in grants and commitments to 81 organizations in 29 states and the District of Columbia. HSHC grantees have helped provide Dental Homes to more than 300,000 children. To learn more, visit <http://www.healthysmileshealthychildren.org/>.

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