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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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****MEDIA:** *We are recommending media coverage take place at two locations:*

1) 10 a.m. at Just Kids Dental, (225) 330-6622, in the Delmont Village Shopping Center (5151 Plank Road) – Southern University basketball player Aericka Hicks and football player Hanson Alfred and Superintendent John Dilworth, along with Board member Jill Dyason, will be present.

2) Between 8:30-11 a.m. with Dr. Johnnie Hunt, (225) 769-1969, 9804 Bluebonnet, Suite A. She represents the Greater Baton Rouge Dental Association and chairs its GKAS Day project.

Local Dentists Close Offices, Donate Time and Services to East Baton Rouge Parish School System's Students in Need

Baton Rouge, La. – The world always looks a little brighter when you can smile. Unfortunately, some children in East Baton Rouge Parish don't have the basic care needed not just for aesthetics but also for better all-round health and self confidence.

This Friday, February 5, many first and second graders will have something big to smile about when **area dentists close up shop just to take care of the dental needs of some 1,230 East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) students selected for assistance.** The Louisiana Dental Association (LDA, along with the Greater Baton Rouge Dental Association), Health Centers in Schools (HCS), the Children's Coalition of Greater Baton Rouge and EBRPSS are teaming up to provide educational materials and dental screenings, as well as preventative care, to selected low-income children who do not have access to proper dental care.

The effort is part of the American Dental Association's (ADA) National Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) program and also, in part, to acknowledge February as national Children's Dental Health Month. The ADA and LDA's role in the GKAS project is to function as an umbrella for the numerous charitable education, screening, prevention and comprehensive treatment programs already in existence.

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From about 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., according to the schedule, 11 area dental offices' dentists, hygienists and assistants are volunteering to screen and provide oral hygiene instruction and supplies. In addition, sites may do a general dental check-up, cleaning and/or apply sealants (protective coverings for the outside of the teeth) to children in need. **The value of the donation totals almost \$70,000 in time and services.**

“Dentists across the country, including many in the Baton Rouge area, volunteer for this event because we have first-hand knowledge of what tooth decay can do to children if left untreated or undiagnosed,” said **Dr. Johnnie Hunt, chairperson for the Greater Baton Rouge Dental Association's Give Kids A Smile Day project.** “Give Kids A Smile Day, as part of National Children's Dental Health Month, is one small way we can make a difference in the lives of so many children.”

Fourteen public schools will be busing the selected children to and from a participating office for dental services. The work is completely free and donated. The participating dental offices and their assigned schools are:

- Drs. Shelly and Lance Fallin – Northeast and White Hills elementary schools
- Dr. Tom Foster – Cedarcrest and Westminster elementary schools
- The Russo-Mounger Office – Cedarcrest and Westminster
- Dr. Nelson Daly – Cedarcrest and Westminster
- Dr. Johnnie Hunt – Highland Elementary
- Just Kids Dental – White Hills, Howell Park, Merrydale and Brookstown elementary schools
- Dr. Lee Koschel – White Hills, Howell Park, Merrydale and Brookstown elementary schools
- LSU Dental School – University Terrace, Wildwood and Bernard Terrace elementary schools
- Pediatric Dental Associates – LaSalle, Broadmoor and Villa del Rey elementary schools
- Distinctive Smiles – LaSalle, Broadmoor and Villa del Rey
- Dr. Steven Ripple and Dr. Kredenna Beverly – Jefferson Terrace Elementary School

“Generous corporate co-sponsors nationwide, such as Henry Schein Dental, Colgate-Palmolive Co. and DEXIS® Digital X-Ray, make the programs possible. More than \$4 million dollars were donated for 2009's efforts. **As of February 3, the ADA reported that there are 1,994 planned events benefitting 324,161 children and involving 12,841 dentists and 36,600 other volunteers nationwide for GKAS.**

“This is not only a matter of health but also of self-esteem and confidence,” said **Sue Catchings, CEO of HCS.** “Without healthy teeth, students may not be able to concentrate on learning due to mouth pain and sensitivity about their teeth being seen by other children. Children shouldn't have to suffer simply because their families cannot afford health care. That is why area dentists are so supportive of this program.”

For more information, visit www.ladental.org or call Catchings at (225) 343-9505 or (225) 721-1748.

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