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DOH's 'Tooth Fairy' dental assistants recognized for making children's first dental appointment positive

SARASOTA — The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) provides a range of preventive and restorative dental services for children. A dental assistant who dresses up as “The Tooth Fairy” can make a child’s first experience of going to the dentist a positive one — even for parents.

Dental assistants are a vital part of the DOH-Sarasota dental health team. In recognition of their contributions, Sarasota County will join communities across the state and nation in observing Dental Assistant Recognition Week, March 2-8.

Dental assistants work in a variety of roles. “Whether working alongside our dentists, taking X-rays, managing the office, working with insurance providers, or providing dental health education dressed in costume as “The Tooth Fairy,” dental assistants are essential to the services we provide to children at our two dental clinics in Sarasota (main location on Ringling Boulevard) and North Port,” said DOH-Sarasota’s Dental Health Director Dr. Chander Malik.



According to public health officials, a healthy smile is a hallmark of good health. Children as young as 1 to 2 years of age can benefit from preventive dental care. These dental visits consist of a visual dental exam, cleaning, fluoride treatment, and dental health education in a family-friendly environment.

“It’s not uncommon for people to think that ‘baby teeth don’t matter; however, by the second grade, children are getting their first molars. So getting sealants applied on the chewing surfaces of their back teeth is optimal at this age in reducing the risk of tooth decay and damage to their permanent teeth,” said DOH-Sarasota pediatric dentist Zaida Marcano, D.D.S.

Since April 2012, more than 1,200 low-income and uninsured children from five North Port elementary schools have been receiving preventive dental care at the North Port Health Center through a grant that DOH-Sarasota received from the Florida Blue Foundation.

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“When dental assistant Mercy Carter dresses as the Tooth Fairy – everyone smiles. Kids are also more apt to pay attention when she tells them how to take care of their teeth,” said Marcano. “This can contribute to a lifetime of good dental-hygiene habits.”

Officials hope to secure funding to expand the program to North County.

DOH-Sarasota provides children who qualify a range of dental care services. These include preventive cleanings and fluoride treatments, exams, x-rays, sealants, space maintainers, extractions, stainless steel crowns and front tooth root canals.

These services are available to those who have Medicaid and are under the age of 21.

For information about eligibility, service sites and appointments, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 941-861-2900.

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