

■ Director's Letter



Happy Rainy Spring!

Many of you joined us at December's Oral Health Summit where the Oral Health Access steering committee, spearheaded by Dientes' Dental Director Dr. Sepi Walthard and County Supervisor Zach Friend, responded to the 2016 oral health needs assessment. More than 100 members of the public heard the strategic plan to increase access to dental services and expand oral health education in our community. Read more about the plan on page 4 and look for a report on our progress in 2018.

As part of the strategic plan, Dientes is in the early planning stages for a new clinic in Santa Cruz. A 10-chair clinic could serve more than 5,000 new children and adults. Our goal is to open in 2019.

I want to thank all of you who contributed to our mission in 2016. Dientes served more patients than ever before, provided more services, including access to specialty care, and opened a new satellite clinic at the Homeless Services Center.

This year, we will celebrate 25 years of service to the community and none of this would be possible without the support of people who know the value of a healthy smile.

Thank you!



Laura Marcus, Executive Director

New Dentist for Kids, Dr. Denisse Monroy

Dientes welcomes Dr. Denisse Monroy— a bilingual, pediatric specialty dentist. Dr. Monroy's favorite part of her work is teaching children and their families the importance of oral hygiene at a young age.

Dr. Monroy grew up in the Central Valley and experienced firsthand the difficulty of accessing oral healthcare. As a child, her family did not have dental insurance and traveled to Mexico to get care that they could afford. This experience influenced her to pursue a position where she could help kids access quality dental care locally. A National Health Service Corp. Scholar, Dr. Monroy's training not only enables her to work with young children, but she can care for kids with behavioral issues and special needs.



Mateo Martinez shows Dr. Denisse Monroy his beautiful smile.

First Tooth, First Birthday Appointments Available

Following one of the goals in the Oral Health Access Strategic Plan, Dientes is happy to announce the availability of appointments for children aged 0-36 months. With Dr. Monroy on board, we are able to accommodate this important goal. It is critical for children to see the dentist by the recommended first tooth or first birthday. These appointments include an exam, cleaning, fluoride varnish application, and oral hygiene education for parents that will help their children keep a healthy smile and avoid cavities.

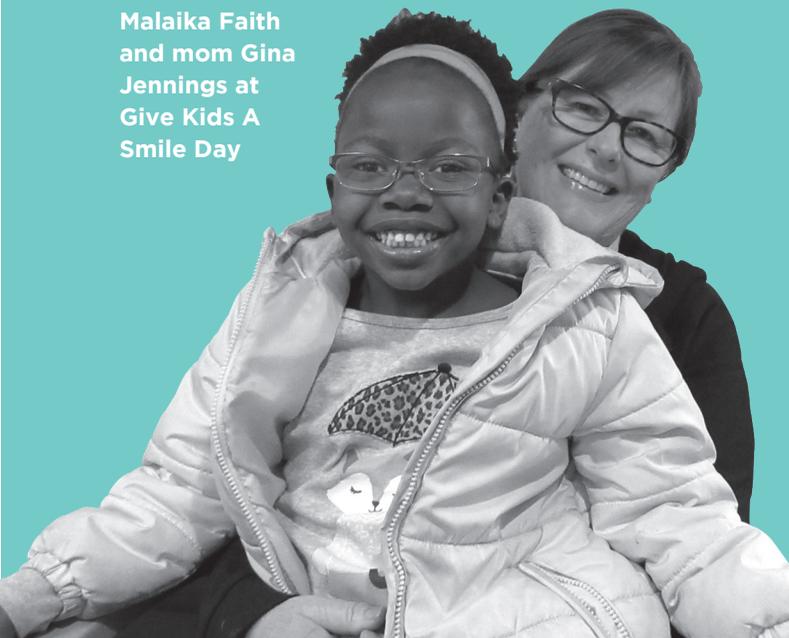
Santa Cruz Gives to Give Kids a Smile Day

February 4, 2017 marked Dientes' 13th annual Give Kids A Smile Day, a free-care event for 38 low-income, uninsured children. Even our youngest patients know how important their smile is to them, as giggly 6-year old Malaika explained, *"My smile is important because when I see my friends, I smile at them!"*

The services provided at this event totaled \$27,000 and were made possible through volunteers from Monterey Bay Dental Hygienists' Association, a generous sponsorship from Kaiser Permanente, and funds from local donors who participated in the 2016 Santa Cruz Gives campaign. Dientes was honored to be 1 of 33 local nonprofits chosen to participate in Santa Cruz Gives, a crowdsourcing campaign for local fundraising. In total, Dientes raised more than \$7,800 from individual donors for February's Give Kids A Smile Day.

Thank you to all who helped make this special day a success!

**Malaika Faith
and mom Gina
Jennings at
Give Kids A
Smile Day**



Understanding the Impact of Potential ACA Changes

There has been a lot of talk since the election about repealing the Affordable Care Act. Today, the talk is more "repair" than repeal. Only time will tell what changes will ultimately be wrought. But, here are a few details about the impacts a repeal and other health care reforms, such as a cap on federal spending, might mean for Dientes patients:

- Approximately 20,000 patients were newly insured on Medi-Cal in Santa Cruz County with the ACA. These 20,000 patients would likely lose their healthcare coverage, including dental care if repeal happens.
- If a Medicaid block grant replaced the current system of matching federal dollars to California's Medi-Cal spending, healthcare funding would be cut by up to 41% over the next decade.
- Done together (the ACA repeal and Medicaid block grant), this reform would reduce Dientes' budget by \$2M annually, and could reduce our available services by 30% while eliminating coverage for more than half of our 10,000 patients.

An ACA repeal is not simply a bad idea, it's a wholesale destruction of our progress toward social justice and healthcare equity that we have fought so hard to create over the past decade. At Dientes, we know there are some problems with the ACA that should be worked out, but expanded coverage for the poor and key protections (such as a ban on lifetime annual limits and prohibiting discrimination against patients with pre-existing conditions) are incredibly important for millions of Americans.

Please make your support of healthcare and the Affordable Care Act known to your elected officials!

Find out how at: www.hcadvocacy.org

New RDAEF **Marvin Martinez** Helps Dientes Increase Access to Dental Care

At Dientes, we support our employee's professional growth. In 2013, we introduced a tuition assistance program to assist our Registered Dental Assistants in receiving an Extended Function (RDAEF) certification, a 9-month program at the University of the Pacific. Marvin Martinez is our third employee to take advantage of this program.

When asked about how this changes his work, he said, *"I am so excited to be able to complete this program. With this license, I can perform more direct patient care such as fillings, cementing crowns taking final impressions, and making dentures."* Dientes Operations Director Tammy Summers continued, *"His new certification increases the number of appointments for our patients by more than 1,600 visits per year."*

Utilizing mid-level providers is one way Dientes remains on the forefront of innovation in our field and serves as a model for other organizations looking to utilize RDAEFs to increase their capacity. **We congratulate Marvin on his achievement!**

Marvin Martinez, RDAEF smiling in his new white coat!



Tiny Tooth Tuesdays

Since October 2016, our Outreach Program has been holding Tiny Tooth Tuesdays, providing dental exams, cleanings and fluoride application once a month for some of East Cliff Family Health Center's youngest patients aged 0-36 months. *"At this age, we're really focused on education and prevention to help avoid problems further down the line,"* says Dientes Dr. Ilana Vaynshteyn.

"Parents are instructed on bottle and pacifier use, as well as healthy diet, brushing tips and flossing techniques," says Dientes Dental Assistant Lupe Ortiz. She continues, *"We want parents to know that baby teeth are important and that their children will need some of them until they're around 12 years old."*

Jillian brought her two and a half year old son Maxton to a dental appointment. She hopes Maxton will get to learn healthy habits early on, something she didn't learn until later in life. At these exams, our youngest patients and their parents have the opportunity to build positive relationships with oral hygiene for a lifetime of happy, healthy smiles.



Mom Jillian holds son Maxton for his first dental exam.

WHAT people are **SAYING.**

"I'm in between jobs and don't have insurance. Without Dientes, my son would still be having tooth pain. I'm so grateful for their services and for the kindness of their staff."

- Luis, patient's father

"All people need the same: health and dental care!"

- Harold, donor

"Coming to Dientes means healthy, better living."

- Yessenia, patient

"Being a patient at Dientes has brought my confidence to a whole new level. It has made a huge difference in how people interact with me and how I interact with them. Thank you!"

- Christina, patient

Next Steps to Increase Oral Health Access

Since its release at the December 2016 Oral Health Summit, we have been busy rolling out the Oral Health Access Strategic Plan, including implementation of the following goals by 2020:

- 1. First Tooth First Birthday:**
Encourages first dental visit.
- 2. Mandatory kinder or first grade dental screenings:**
Creates a dental home for kids.
- 3. Expanding treatment, prevention and clinical capacity:**
Includes fluoride varnish at well-child medical appointments, Salud hiring staff to grow their efficiency, and Dientes' new clinic project.



Dientes Dental Director and Oral Health Access co-Chair Dr. Sepi Walthard presents at the December Oral Health Summit.

Only 25,000 of the 80,000 people on Medi-Cal can access dental care. We are confident this Strategic Plan will improve oral healthcare access; but, we can't do it alone. We look forward to collaborating with our community to make the Plan a success. **To get involved and learn more, visit oralhealthsc.org.**

Leaving a Legacy of Healthy Smiles

An easy way to support Dientes' work far into the future is to include us in your estate planning. Simply make Dientes a beneficiary on your life insurance policy, retirement account, will or living trust. Ask your life insurance agent, retirement plan administrator or other institution for a change of beneficiary form. Please identify Dientes on the form as follows:

Dientes Community Dental Care, 1830 Commercial Way, Santa Cruz, CA 95065, Tax ID: 77-0311752

Find out more: dientes.org/donate



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831.464.5410

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MISSION : *Creating lasting oral health for the underserved children and adults of Santa Cruz County and neighboring communities.*

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ACA Effects: A Patient Story

Steven Robins moved here over 46 years ago to attend UCSC, "back when it was all just fields and everything was groovy," he recalls. As a freelance writer, he did not have health insurance and paid cash for minimal dental services. When Medi-Cal reinstated adult dental benefits, Steven found Dientes. After so many difficult years trying to get dental care, he finally established a dental home. Like so many people who have access to care due to the ACA, Steven proclaims, "I'm very grateful now to have Medi-Cal. Not everyone is as fortunate, but I believe that Dientes is a model that shows dental care for all is possible."

Dientes patient Steven Robins shares his gratitude.

