Press Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Contact: Sheree Storm
sstorm@dientes.org, 831-600-8256

Dientes Celebrates its 12th Annual "Give Kids A Smile Day"
46 Children receive free dental care

(Santa Cruz, CA) February 6th marked a day of smiles for many underserved kids in our community. Dientes Community Dental Care celebrated Give Kids A Smile Day by partnering with 7 volunteer hygienists and 3 volunteer hygiene students from the Monterey Bay Dental Hygienists' Association to provide 46 uninsured children with free dental care. The value of services rendered totaled nearly $29,000 and included oral health exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, extractions and restorative care.

Speaking with Elsy Franco, mom of patient 5-year-old Alexia while she waited for her daughter's appointment to be done, she explains how very grateful she is: "Today's event helps out so much -- not to have to pay out of pocket! Alexia needs a lot of dental work. It would take half of our rent money to pay for the services she is getting at Dientes today for free."

Several patients seen at Give Kids A Smile Day were originally seen at Dientes' school Outreach Program, which runs at 15 elementary schools throughout the County. Dientes Outreach Manager Tana Stragalinos, explains, "At schools, Dientes provides exams, x-rays, cleanings, and identifies any need for further care. We want children to have a dental home. If cost is in the way of follow-up care, we try to schedule the kids for this event."

Hunter Borden, age 5, is one such patient. His father, Noah, explains, "I am a self-employed tree trimmer and we don't have dental insurance. Hunter needs 2 fillings. In the past, we have gone home to Thailand for dental and medical care, but that has gotten too expensive. This event helps us out financially so much. I am so impressed with Dientes, I am going to look at becoming a patient myself."

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. As a part of the month of recognition, the American Dental Association launched Give Kids A Smile Day in 2003. Now the event has grown to coordinate thousands of dentists benefiting approximately 350,000 kids each year. This is Dientes' 12th year of providing free service for kids.

In California over 500,000 kids miss school due to dental problems each year. Give Kids A Smile Day helps identify and serve the kids who would otherwise fall through the cracks—families who don't qualify for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families, and can't afford expensive or even discounted dental care at local clinics.

"It's great to be a part of Give Kids A Smile for another year," said Leslie Eggleston, RDH, B.S. and VP Dental Health Advisor for the Monterey Bay Dental Hygienists' Association. "We are happy to provide hygiene services to these young patients. We want them to have a great experience so they want to keep coming back for great care."

#   #   #

Dientes Community Dental Care's mission is to create lasting oral health for the underserved children and adults in Santa Cruz County and neighboring communities. 96% of Dientes' patients live at or below the poverty level. Dientes accepts Medi-Cal (one of ten providers in Santa Cruz County) and offers sliding scale fees for uninsured patients. Dientes is a proud partner of United Way.