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COMMUNITY DENTAL

Press Release

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Dientes and PG&E Partner to Improve Children's Oral Health *Grant Impacts Kids at Boulder Creek Elementary*

(Santa Cruz, CA) Dientes Community Dental Care and PG&E announced a partnership to improve the oral health of children attending Boulder Creek Elementary. The \$1,250 grant impacts 25 low-income kids by providing dental care at the school.

Boulder Creek Elementary is just one of 15 schools at which Dientes' Outreach Program goes to provide care twice a year. Dental services include everything from x-rays, exams and cleanings to fluoride treatments. More complicated treatment is referred to Dientes' clinic, creating a dental home for the kids seen at the Outreach Program.

In addition, the Outreach Program features a full day of oral health education in each classroom. The education component is key to creating good oral hygiene habits and preventing cavities. This is especially important since "dental caries (tooth decay) is the single most common chronic childhood disease" according to the U.S. Surgeon General Report entitled *Oral Health in America*.

Dientes Outreach Program Manager Tana Stragalinos, comments on the necessity of such a program, "Low-income families often struggle with getting to the dentist. The Outreach Program makes sure that the kids who wouldn't have any other way to see the dentist get access to the care they need."

Dientes' Outreach Program provides dental care at 25 locations in Santa Cruz County, 15 of which are schools. PG&E support of the Outreach Program enables Dientes to deliver dental services at Boulder Creek Elementary School, impacting nearly 30 low-income kids and making life a little easier for working families.

PG&E Division Manager Rob Morse is enthusiastic about the Program, "At PG&E, we look for opportunities to improve the lives of those who live in our community and Dientes' Outreach Program provides a great way to

have a long-term impact. The services they provide and the oral hygiene they teach will carry these kids through life.”

A year ago, Dientes opened a 7-chair pediatric wing attached to their main Santa Cruz clinic. Half of their 10,000 patients this year will be kids. In August, Dientes opened a 4-chair clinic in Watsonville. Altogether with the Outreach Program, Dientes expects to provide 30,000 visits to patients in need. This is a major increase in access to dental care for the area’s low-income children, adults and seniors. Partners like PG&E make care possible for children who cannot get to the dentist.

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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.

Photos:

PG&E Rob Morse and Dientes Tana Stragalinos

Caption: PG&E Division Manager Rob Morse and Dientes Outreach Program Manager Tana Stragalinos survey the 2-chair portable clinic that was set up to provide dental services for kids in the Boulder Creek Elementary staff room.

8 yr old Autumn Young and Haidee Hernandez-Barron

Caption: Sporting a newly cleaned smile, 8 yr old Autumn Young is ready to go back to class at Boulder Creek Elementary.