



Media Advisory

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Dientes Launches Dental Care at Grey Bears for Seniors in Need *Strategy to Address a Critical Gap in Access to Oral Health Care for Seniors*

What: Grey Bears, the newest member of Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County (OHA), is kicking off OHA's new strategic focus on seniors with a day of oral health care and education provided by Dientes' Outreach Program, which will set up a mobile dental clinic to provide care. Grey Bears volunteers will pack over 2,000 bags of healthy foods and include dental hygiene kits and oral health education materials destined for low-income seniors in the community.

When: 9:00-10:00 am, Thursday, January 18, 2024

Where: Grey Bears, 2815 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95065 – *We will meet there and walk over.*

Who: Grey Bears CEO Jennifer Merchant, Dientes Chief Strategy Officer Sheree Storm, and Dientes Outreach Manager Lizette Zamora will be on hand to describe the programs and to answer questions.

Why: Oral health care for seniors is critically important and expensive to access since Medicare does not include dental care – it costs extra and for many fixed- and low-income seniors in Santa Cruz County, there are no extras. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 5 seniors in the U.S. have no teeth. These challenges impact senior's ability to talk, eat, socialize, and have self-confidence. Not to mention the impacts to overall health, including chronic diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, etc.

This is why Grey Bears, the newest member of Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County (OHA), is kicking off OHA's new strategic focus on seniors with a day of oral health care provided by Dientes. And, why Delta Dental donated 16,000 oral hygiene kits and educational flyers to be distributed through senior serving organizations like Grey Bears, Meals on Wheels, Elderday, and more. Delta Dental's gift is part of a \$5M investment in senior oral health in Santa Cruz County through a 5-year grant to Salud Para La Gente and Dientes.

Dientes' Outreach Program provides dental care out in the community for those who have challenges getting to a clinic. These locations include many schools, but also skilled nursing facilities, Grey Bears, and soon Elderday. Basic dental services are provided from exams and cleanings to fluoride treatments. More complicated treatment is referred to one of four Dientes' clinics, including the new 1500 Capitola Road clinic and is part of a health and housing campus with Santa Cruz Community Health and MidPen Housing.

The expansion of Dientes' Outreach Program to senior serving organizations is part of an Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County strategy to address the dire need for access to care for seniors 65+ in Santa Cruz County, where only 26% of seniors are going to the dentist, according to the [2022 Oral Health Report](#) that summarizes "[The Continuing Need for Oral Health Services](#)" needs assessment published by Dientes.

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Dientes Community Dental Care's mission is to create lasting oral health for the under-served 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.

Grey Bears' mission is to improve the health and well-being of seniors and our community through food and meal deliveries, volunteerism, resource conservation and recycling. Grey Bears' vision is for all seniors to live healthy, meaningful lives.