

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The Happy Teeth Project gets families to talk floss with Southwest Human Development**  
*Smiles Bags distributed and educational stations to be at local school this Tuesday*

**WHAT:** Southwest Human Development continues its outreach via its Head Start and Happy Teeth Program this Tuesday with a special event aimed at educating parents on oral health and the importance of preventative care. The organization's special event through its Head Start (ages 3-to-5-years-old) and Early Head Start (birth to 3-years-old) programs will focus on engaging dads as a part of its Father Involvement Program. Thanks to a generous grant from the Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation, Southwest Human Development was able to implement the Happy Teeth Project in five different school districts throughout the Valley, as well as Educare Arizona.

This Tuesday's event at Educare Arizona invites parents picking their students up from classes to stop by and learn with their children about techniques for brushing teeth, how to floss and how to make a healthy snack their teeth will love.

"When a child has good oral health, they are physically healthy and ready to learn in school. In contrast, a child who is experiencing poor oral health may be in chronic pain or experiencing other health issues that may result in missed school days," said Mindy Zapata, M.Ed., director of Head Start and Early Head Start, Southwest Human Development. "Since implementing this program, we have had a tremendous response from families who are supporting their children through this program. Families have reported greater interest and understanding about the benefits of oral health for their children, as well as themselves. The Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation has been an incredible partner to make the Happy Teeth Project become a reality."

In total, Southwest Human Development expects to reach a total of 1,238 low-income, underserved prenatal and parenting families through this program. Parents will be provided with *Smile Bags* and educated on the importance of proper oral health for young children. Depending on a family's need a *Smile Bag* will include toothbrushes and toothpaste for both adults, children, toddlers, infant finger brushes and of course everyone's favorite, floss!

"Setting a base of good oral health truly starts at birth," said Sandi Perez, Ph.D., vice president of communications and community benefit for Delta Dental of Arizona. "The Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation is proud to support the Happy Teeth Program and the amazing job it does to engage both the child and the parent."

**WHEN:** Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2013 from 1-3 p.m.

**WHERE:** Educare Arizona (in the courtyard)  
1300 N. 48<sup>th</sup> St., Phoenix, AZ 85008

**VISUALS:**

- Over 100 people are expected to participate in the afternoon's event as they pick up their students from classes at Educare Arizona.

- Nutrition activities that teach the link between healthy foods and oral health such as a **yogurt parfait station**.
- Development activities led by Southwest Human Development's Family Support Specialists with the help of Educare parent volunteers including: **painting** with toothbrushes, **making a model mouth** out of Playdough (gums) and white beans (teeth) which children will then use yarn to floss and shaving cream station where children will learn how to **brush their teeth**.
- For participating parents will also have the opportunity for incentives such as oral health baskets and **electric toothbrushes** for themselves!
- Magic Smiles dental office will be there to distribute oral health education and toothbrushes to families.

**WHO: About Southwest Human Development**

Southwest Human Development is Arizona's largest nonprofit dedicated to early childhood development. Recognizing a child's earliest experiences and relationships establish the foundation for all future development, Southwest Human Development's more than 40 programs are designed to prevent problems before they arise or, when they already exist, provide the opportunity to intervene as early and effectively as possible. Southwest Human Development's comprehensive services are focused on very young children – ages birth to five – and their families in the areas of child health and development, Easter Seals disabilities services, Head Start and early literacy, child welfare and professional education and training. Learn more at [www.swhd.org](http://www.swhd.org).

**Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation**

Founded in 1997, the Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation is a nonprofit organization created to promote oral health and prevent dental disease in children and youth through age 18, with a particular emphasis in underserved and uninsured communities. Since its inception, the Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation has provided more than \$6 million in community grants to oral health promotion and dental disease prevention programs in Arizona. For more information on the Foundation, please visit [www.deltadentalaz.com/foundation](http://www.deltadentalaz.com/foundation).

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