

It's All About Smiles

It is February and it is fitting we comment on the charitable contributions of California dentists and their association this month. Feb. 7 marks the second annual "Give Kids A Smile" day conceived by the American Dental Association in 2002 for its inaugural installment in February 2003.

California Dental Association members, their staff members, and dental students from throughout the state helped to make the initial outing of this outstanding program a tremendous success. Members of the dental industry also strongly supported the effort with contributions of materials and supplies. As this column was being drafted, many colleagues had already indicated their intent to participate in the 2004 program. We anticipate the turnout will again demonstrate the profession's long history of commitment to the prevention of oral disease.

As 2003 entered its last few months, there were additional reasons for there to be "smiles" for organized dentistry in California. On Nov. 12, the California Dental Association Foundation was notified that its joint venture with the Dental Health Foundation to develop and administer oral health education and training targeting dental decay in underserved children aged 5 years and younger, had been awarded a \$7 million contract from the California Children and Families Commission. This contract is believed to be the single largest oral health education grant ever awarded in California. The project will provide education and training for dentists and other primary care profes-

sionals as well as increasing consumer awareness of the importance of early oral health care for young children.

This is an accomplishment that should bring pride to all members of CDA and especially to the board and staff of the Foundation. The Foundation, while still in a stage of relative infancy, has demonstrated by this initiative a strong commitment to contribute to improved oral health education, and ultimately to the oral health of the California populace.

Dental leadership in community oral health matters did not stop here. CDA, the CDA Foundation, the Mid-Peninsula Dental Society, and the California Fluoridation Task Force worked tirelessly and helped provide the resources to help Palo Alto voters reject a measure that would have overturned a 49-year history of water fluoridation in that city by banning its future use.

Another instance in which CDA and the Foundation have been battling anti-fluoridation efforts is the defense of the benefits of fluoridation in litigation involving the City of Watsonville vs. the California Department of Health Services.

Finally, in mid-December, "smiles" were again in strong evidence when it was announced that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California had signed a CDA Foundation fluoridation funding contract in which the foundation will fund \$5.5 million to enable the MWD to build water fluoridation facilities at each of the



This is an accomplishment that should bring pride to all members of CDA and especially to the board and staff of the Foundation.

five water district treatment plants. These facilities will enable the MWD to provide fluoridation to approximately 17 million customers in the greater Los Angeles basin.

These accomplishments should bring great satisfaction, particularly to those in the profession who have worked relentlessly for years to advance the benefits of community water fluoridation to the oral health of the public. But more importantly, we feel it really does illustrate the important impact that the foundation has had in advancing the profession's leadership in public oral health issues in a relatively short time.

For many years, February has traditionally featured a focus on dental health, particularly for children. That makes this month a particularly good time to celebrate some rather significant progress in the public health efforts of the dental profession in California. We doubt that the progress described would have been possible without the emergence of the CDA Foundation. The funding, made possible by the foundation, and the linkage between the foundation and the community have clearly been beneficial to the achievement of these recent public oral health initiatives. Without the foundation, dentistry would not have the opportunities it now has to influence these initiatives.

We anticipate the foundation will continue to build the image of the profession as the leader in advancing the oral health of the public through contributions of resources and support for preventive initiatives. The end result will be improved smiles for the public and smiles of pride for the profession. **CDA**