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# Health Care District's Dental Team Kicks Off National Children's Dental Health Month with a Lesson on Healthy Smiles

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To kick off National Children's Dental Health Month, a team from the Health Care District of Palm Beach County's Dental Clinics provided oral health education for 150 children between the ages of three and five. The early education initiative at the Belle Glade PEPPI Head Start Center is part of the C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics' countywide effort to provide children with or without insurance access to a dentist. The goal is to combat the sobering national statistic that 20% of children under the age of five is suffering from tooth decay, which can lead to pain and infection. [1]

"It is important to develop good dental habits at an early age. We seek to partner with parents and encourage them to have their child get annual dental check-ups starting at age one," said Tamara-Kay Tibby, DMD, MPH, Dental Director with the Health Care District's C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics. "Education and regular dental visits at an early age lower a child's risk for future dental caries."

Early childhood caries - decay in children under six – is the most common chronic disease of childhood. It often affects low-income children who lack

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access to a dentist. Early childhood caries is a result of poor dental hygiene, bad snacking habits and consuming too much juice and other sugary drinks. By eating the right foods, brushing and flossing, and keeping regular dental appointments, children can easily prevent the pain and infection associated with dental caries.

With the help of a smiling yellow dog puppet named “Jackito”, Nancy Fox-Goughan, Dental Hygienist and Milagros (Millie) Rodriguez, Outreach Liaison taught the young students proper brushing and flossing techniques. The children were treated to an educational cartoon about oral health and played a game about proper nutrition, which taught the students how to choose healthy snacks from different food groups. Each child received an oral hygiene kit with a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss to use at home.





The C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics provide quality medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services to adults and children with or without insurance. The nine clinic sites throughout Palm Beach County, Florida, along with a mobile health clinic serving the homeless, are Federally Qualified Health Centers owned and operated by the Health Care District of Palm Beach County.

Lutheran Services Florida has oversight of the PEPPI (Preschool Enrichment Program with Parental Involvement) and like all Head Start programs, places a major emphasis on parent involvement and engagement. Lutheran Services Florida partners with the Belle Glade community to help educate children and support families who face tremendous socio-economic barriers.

[1] KFF Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts, Percent of Children (ages 1-17) with Oral Health Problems, 2016.

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