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Communications

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**ST. DAVID'S DENTAL PROGRAM PROVIDES HEALTHY SMILES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY
WITH SCREENINGS, CARE, & EDUCATION FOR THOUSANDS OF CENTRAL TEXAS
CHILDREN**

AUSTIN (February 12, 2008) – St. David's Community Health Foundation Leadership is celebrating the most successful year in its Dental Program's 10-year history with a week-long special focus on good oral health care habits at Valentine's Day.

Special Valentines featuring the program's mascot, Theo, are being given to children receiving treatment in the program's five mobile dental clinics this week, underscoring ways to "Be Sweet to Your Teeth." The bilingual cards remind children to brush, see the dentist, and avoid sweets—or, on Valentine's Day, to be sure to "brush and swish" after enjoying their candy.

Since unveiling three new mobile dental clinics one year ago this week, the five-Freightliner fleet of the St. David's Dental Program has been able to screen and treat thousands more schoolchildren throughout Central Texas than in years past. The program travels to Title I elementary schools in Travis, Hays, and Williamson counties to provide free dental care in Austin, Dell Valle, Hays, Manor, Pflugerville, and Round Rock ISDs, and accompanies the vans' visits to a school with oral health education in the classroom and a reinstated sealant program to protect second-graders' teeth.

**St. David's Community Health Foundation Leadership Dental Program
Service Increases 2006-2008**

	2006 Actual	2007 Actual
Schools visited	34	32
Students screened	10,021	25,094
Patient encounters	5,012	9,600
Unduplicated patients	4,080	7,000
Estimated value of free services	\$2.1 million	\$3.5 million
Students and parents given oral health education	12,400	18,500

"The beauty of our program is that we remove the barriers to dental care that too many of our schoolchildren face," said Marsha Cook, executive director of St. David's Community Health Foundation Leadership Dental Program. "Many families have to choose between bills or paying for dental care—that's a choice no family should have to make. St. David's Dental Program exists to make dental care available to those who need it, and we are proud of our staff as they have worked to expand the program from two to five vans."

When the St. David's Dental Program mobile dental clinic pulls up at a local school, the first step is to provide screenings for the children in the school. Those children who are found to need dental work are given a notification form to take home. Those who have no resources for regular dental care receive a consent form, and when parents have reviewed and returned the signed form to the school, those children become eligible for treatment on the dental vans.

“Our dentists and assistants work to see all eligible children at each school,” said Dr. Patrice Coons, clinical director of St. David's Dental Program. “And we are fortunate to have the support of more than 270 local dentists who volunteer their practice to treat children whose needs are more extensive than can be treated in the mobile setting.”

While St. David's Dental Program focuses mainly on Central Texas schoolchildren, during school vacations the program also provides services for patients of local safety-net clinics, and works throughout the year as a partner in the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians.

“We have been enormously pleased to be able to provide care to so many more children during this first year at full capacity,” said Cook. “Having this fleet of vans and our excellent dental staff has allowed us to better fulfill our mission, and to fulfill the promise of a better life.”

St. David's Community Health Foundation Leadership is a not-for-profit community asset belonging to all of the citizens of Central Texas. The mission of the organization's Dental Program is to provide education on good dental health and remove many of the barriers to oral health care by taking care directly to those who are in need.
For more information, visit www.sdchf.org/dental.htm