

ST. DAVID'S DENTAL PROGRAM FLEET EXPANSION PUTS MORE SMILES ON MORE FACES

AUSTIN — On February 13, 2007, the St. David's Community Health Foundation Leadership Dental Program unveiled three new mobile dental clinics. The dedication took place at Wooten Elementary School in Austin. The 40-foot Freightliners have joined the fleet of St. David's dental vans, which provide free dental care to thousands of schoolchildren and hundreds of adults each year.

“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 the new mobile dental clinics will help us achieve that.”

When the St. David's Dental Program partners with a school, the first step is to provide screenings for the children in the school. Those who are found to need dental work and have no resources for regular dental care then receive a consent form to take home. When parents have reviewed and returned the signed consent form to the school, the children become eligible for treatment on the dental vans.

The five mobile clinics travel to Title I elementary and middle school campuses in Travis, Hays, and Williamson counties to provide on-site dental care.

“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 250 local dentists who volunteer their practice to treat children whose needs are more extensive than can be treated in the mobile setting.”

With two mobile dental clinics, the Dental Program was able to screen approximately 33,000 students each year and provide treatment for more than 5,000. As the fleet nearly triples, so too will the care—with an estimated capacity of as many as 90,000 screenings and more than 12,000 treatments. The new dental vans were acquired with the support of The Michael &

Susan Dell Foundation, the Topfer Family Foundation, the Still Water Foundation, the Dell Foundation, and the St. David's Community Health Foundation.

“This expansion of our fleet will allow us to provide services to many more local children who have nowhere else to turn for dental care,” said Cook. “This allows 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.