SMILEmobile Program wins New York State award

One of the cornerstones of the Eastman Dental Center’s community outreach activities, the SMILEmobile Program, has been honored with the Healthcare Association of New York State’s prestigious Community Health Improvement Award.

Given annually to recognize outstanding initiatives that improve community health and well being in the state, the award marks the second time in four years that a Medical Center program has captured this top honor. In 2002, the Department of Psychiatry’s Project Link program won HANYS’ Community Health Improvement Award.

A dental office on wheels, the SMILEmobile Program brings oral health services year round to children who would otherwise not have access to much needed dental care. Medical Center dentists, hygienists and dental residents provide comprehensive oral healthcare services on three fully equipped dental vans to children and teens.

Each year, Eastman Dental Center works with the Rochester City School District and other organizations to select the locations for the SMILEmobile. In 2004, the SMILEmobile provided services to 3,700 children and teens at 15 inner city schools, eight Head Start programs, and three remote rural locations. Since its inception, the program has served an estimated 39,000 people.

“Service to the Rochester community has long been a central part of the University of Rochester Medical Center,” said C. McCollister Evarts, M.D., CEO of the Medical Center and Strong Health. “As we continue to grow and expand our community health initiatives, it is fitting that we pay tribute to those programs like the SMILEmobile that have been serving the community for years. I salute the faculty, staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the past three decades to make the SMILEmobile the resounding success that it is.”

The program’s roots were as a volunteer based community collaboration jointly led by the Monroe County Dental Society and Eastman Dental Center, which together introduced New York State’s first dental mobile unit in 1967. Less than two years later, recognizing both the success and the continued need for such services, Eastman Dental Center agreed to oversee all operations of the program. Today, the SMILEmobile Program employs 12 fulltime health workers, with each van staffed with a dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant and clinical coordinator. In addition to the clinical component of the SMILEmobile Program, staff collaborates with the teachers at each school, making available age appropriate curriculums and in classroom visits by dental hygienists. Staff also provides continuing education and presents educational seminars during parent nights hosted by the school.

“It is a great honor to be recognized for a program that is clearly making a difference to our community,” said Cyril Meyerowitz, D.D.S., M.S., professor and chair of the Eastman Department of Dentistry, and director of Eastman Dental Center. “As the Rochester area’s safety net to ensure the underserved in our community have access to oral health care services, we will continue to work to develop programs like the SMILEmobile to serve those most in need.”

For more media inquiries, contact:
Constance Truesdale
(585) 275-5064
constance_truesdale@urmc.rochester.edu