

The Southside Times

Local dentists give kids a free reason to smile

By Sara Gentry

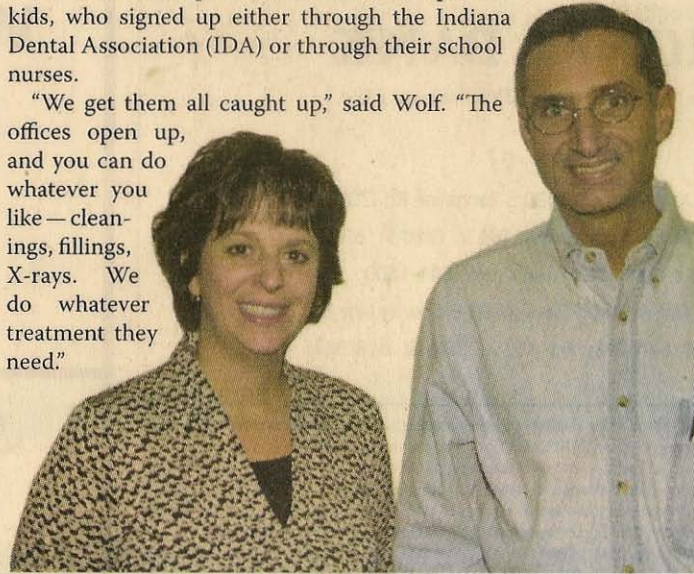
sgentry@ss-times.com

Give Kids a Smile Day, held annually on the first Friday of February, serves as a centerpiece for National Children's Dental Health Month. On Give Kids a Smile Day, dentists across the country donate their time to provide dental services, free of charge, to children of low-income families who would not be able to receive care otherwise. This year's observance saw the treatment of more than 450,000 children by nearly 12,000 dentists.

Two of the participating dentists, Dr. Marsha Hickey and Dr. David Wolf, treat about 30 children every year at their Southside practice. Hickey and Wolf have been involved in Give Kids a Smile since it started six years ago, and this year, they were visited by an American Dental Association (ADA) representative to recognize their work for the cause.

All nine of the practice's chairs were open for kids, who signed up either through the Indiana Dental Association (IDA) or through their school nurses.

"We get them all caught up," said Wolf. "The offices open up, and you can do whatever you like — cleanings, fillings, X-rays. We do whatever treatment they need."



Facts from the ADA

- The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends that children see a dentist no later than their first birthday, yet only 3 out of 5 children have seen a dentist before kindergarten.
- For every child in this country without health insurance there are 2.6 without dental insurance.
- 23 million children in the United States do not have dental insurance.
- The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (of the National Institutes of Health) reports that 80 percent of tooth decay is now found in only 25 percent of children.
- Children from families with annual incomes of \$10,000 to \$20,000 have 10 times more unmet dental needs than children whose families earn more than \$50,000 per year.
- Dental expenditures account for about one percent of the total amount spent in Medicaid budgets nationally in 2005.