

AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

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ADA **NEWS**

NOVEMBER 7, 2011

VOLUME 42 NO. 20

Give Kids A Smile hits the fast track at NASCAR event

BY STACIE CROZIER

Concord, N.C.—The ADA's Give Kids A Smile program—and its sponsors 3M ESPE Dental and Henry Schein Cares—raced into high gear Oct. 15 at Charlotte Motor Speedway, hosting a five-hour children's dental event before the Bank of America 500 race and bringing the GKAS message to one of the nation's largest spectator sport fan bases, the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, or NASCAR.

About 85 volunteers—dentists, dental students, dental assistants, dental hygienists and others—manned the GKAS tent in the Charlotte Motor Speedway fan zone.

Flying to North Carolina just hours after his installation at Annual Session in Las Vegas, ADA President William Calnon welcomed volunteers at a pre-event breakfast. Then he, his wife Mary Kay, his dental assistant Cheryl Ennis and his hygienist Jessica Ennis headed to the track to volunteer at the GKAS/NASCAR event.

"Give Kids A Smile isn't a cure, it's a wake-up call," said Dr. Calnon. "Programs like this shine a light of awareness on the problem of access to dental care for children. I've been active with GKAS since the beginning. I've volunteered. I've served on the national advisory committee and I am proud of the work we are doing."

"The GKAS NASCAR program is another excellent example of how the program can help educate the public about the importance of good oral health and provide dental services to children in need," said Steve Kess, chair of the GKAS National Advisory Committee and vice president of Global Professional Relations, Henry Schein Inc.

John Stefanick, director of industry and professional relations for 3M ESPE, told volunteers when he heard the GKAS National Advisory Committee's mission statement "to eliminate cavities in U.S. 5-year-olds by 2020," he thought, "I've been in the dental business for a long time and no one has ever said that before. We hope that by working with NASCAR, we can increase public awareness and have a GKAS program that will continue to have legs in the future and meet that ambitious goal."

"We have the opportunity to change the lives of the kids we see today," said Russ Baker, Henry Schein regional manager in Charlotte, N.C. "Henry Schein has donated more than \$11 million in dental products to GKAS and we hope our volunteers today have fun and make the experience fun for the kids we see."

The North Carolina Missions of Mercy loaned 10 dental chairs and their X-ray truck for the event, and had volunteers on-site to assist as needed.

"We hold 12 MOM events a year in North Carolina, so we are glad to be able to help today," said Dr. Bill Blaylock, NCMOM director. "We've provided more than \$14 million in dental services since we began in 2003. We generally treat adults, so this will be an exciting change for us."

The North Carolina Missions of Mercy is an affiliated outreach program of the North Carolina Dental Society.

Dr. Chad Merrell, a Greensboro, N.C., general dentist who has volunteered at his local NC MOM event, got up early to make the 90-mile trip to Charlotte to work as a GKAS volunteer. He was assigned to work in the X-ray truck, helping provide each child with a digital radiograph saved into a wristband flash drive.

"My day in radiology was great," said Dr. Merrell. "It was definitely a positive experience that brought lots of attention to the Give Kids A Smile



Volunteers: ADA President William Calnon reviews a child's chart during the GKAS event, as Jessica Ennis, left, and Cheryl Ennis, his dental hygienist and dental assistant, look on.



Pre-race exam: A young NASCAR fan makes time for a dental screening before attending the race Oct. 15 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

program. I hope I am fortunate enough to volunteer for another event."

The 175 or so participating kids received a panoramic digital radiograph saved on a USB drive bracelet for them to take home, fluoride varnish treatment, and pit and fissure sealants (when appropriate).

Children also watched interactive dental health education from Guru's Brusher Bailey Ed-Venture series and met the dental health hero and mascot in person. Participating children also received a backpack with a T-shirt and a dental health kit complete with toothpaste, toothbrush, floss and instructions.

"We wanted to make this a memorable day for the kids," said Dr. Jeff Dalin, clinical director of the program. "Kids also got a pit tour and some lunch during their visit. It turned out to be a very special day."

Dr. Dalin, the St. Louis general dentist who co-founded Give Kids A Smile, said he was honored to see the program reach out to a broad new audience—NASCAR fans.

"It was so exciting for me when the ADA made Give Kids A Smile a national program for dentists 10 years ago, and now we are ready to take the program to an even broader audience that has brand loyalty," said Dr. Dalin. "I never imagined how much of an impact this program could make."

NASCAR estimates its fan base to be about 75 million, and says it's the No. 1 spectator sport in the nation, with more of the top 20 highest-attended sporting events in the U.S. than any other sport. NASCAR races are broadcast in more than 150 countries and in 20 languages. The website also says NASCAR fans are the most brand loyal in all of sports, and as a result more Fortune 500 companies participate in NASCAR than any other sport.

Participating children included 59 clients of A Child's Place, a Charlotte-based agency that provides support for homeless children and their families.

ACP's support includes helping clients with access to medical and dental care, tutors as well as basic life necessities like school supplies and uniforms, books, backpacks, hygiene products and individually pre-packaged nonperishable snacks that kids can take home for dinner and weekend meals.



Videos and more: Children, like this youngster, a client of A Child's Place, watched oral health education videos featuring Guru's dental hero, Brusher Bailey, and received dental-themed wristbands, a backpack, a T-shirt and a dental health kit.

"We do whatever it takes to meet the needs of homeless kids and get them on a level playing field," said Annabelle Suddreth, executive director. "Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade and their graduation rate is less than 25 percent. They have three times the rate of behavioral issues and are sick four times as often as children who have homes. They go hungry at twice the rate of other children.

"Right now we have 4,711 school-age clients and we estimate that there are another 1,600 or so

homeless children ages 0-5," Mrs. Suddreth added. "They just aren't documented because they are not in school yet."

The ACP bus began picking up children at 6:30 a.m. the day of the event to make sure they could participate in the GKAS event, she added. "It meant a lot to these children to be able to come here today."

Speedway Children's Charities helped line up ACP children as well as other kids in need, and volunteers also served race fan families who walked

up to the tent for X-rays, fluoride varnish and oral health education.

GKAS volunteers also passed out 1,750 oral health product and instruction kits provided by Henry Schein Cares to race fans of all ages passing by the GKAS tent.

NASCAR's Greg Biffle, driver of the No. 16 3M car, is a celebrity spokesman and the star of a new Give Kids A Smile public service announcement, which debuted during an Oct. 14 press conference at the Charlotte Motor Speedway Media Center. Greg also made two visits to the GKAS tent on race weekend, greeting fans, signing autographs and encouraging kids to take care of their oral health.

The ADA Foundation provided a grant to support communication tools to more broadly disseminate oral health information to the public, including the production of the PSA and other media outreach. (For more on how donors can support

Want to help give more kids a smile?

- Make a tax-deductible donation to the ADA Foundation's Give Kids A Smile Fund to support grants for national and regional dental access to care programs. Visit "givekidsasmile.ada.org" to donate.

- Make a tax-deductible donation of \$25, \$50, \$100 or \$200 to the Henry Schein Cares Foundation Give Kids A Smile Education and

Communication Fund to be used by the ADA for approved program expansion and education activities. Visit "www.henryschein.com/us-en/dental/Default.aspx" and search for GKAS.

- Purchase a collector's edition, die-cast NASCAR car No. 16 with custom replica graphics and unique, commemorative display plaque from Henry Schein Dental for \$75. ■

GKAS, see sidebar, this page.)

Driving the No. 16 car emblazoned with a GKAS logo, Greg took the lead on lap 50 and held it for 68 laps. A lugnut penalty and a brush with the wall slowed him down, but he still finished in

the lead lap in 15th place.

About 110,000 fans attended the Saturday night Bank of America 500 race Oct. 15 and nearly 5.4 million viewers tuned in on ESPN to watch the race—with a 3.2 TV rating.

A new dad to daughter Emma, born in July, Mr. Biffle told reporters at the press conference he wanted to help spread the message about the importance of good oral health. He said he was touched by some "staggering figures" about dental disease—that 80 percent of tooth decay is found in 25 percent of U.S. children; that 51 million school hours are lost because of untreated cavities; and that a third of U.S. kids don't have dental insurance.

Greg also spread the GKAS message on Sirius Radio Oct. 13 and the ESPN NASCAR Now television program on Oct. 14.

View the PSA or get more information on Give Kids a Smile by logging on to the GKAS website, "givekidsasmile.ada.org." Or visit the GKAS Facebook page for the latest GKAS news, "www.facebook.com/GiveKidsASmile". ■

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