For Immediate Release

MCHD Smile Express to treat pregnant women and children in Preston Co.

MORGANTOWN, WV (May 14, 2019) — Smile Express, Monongalia County Health Department’s mobile dentistry unit, will make day-long stops in six Preston County towns in June to provide dental care to pregnant women as well as children up to the age of 18.

The effort, coordinated with Preston County Health Department, is made possible by a grant from Your Community Foundation of North Central West Virginia, which services Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison and Taylor counties.

“We’re super excited to bring MCHD Smile Express to Preston County,” said V.J. Davis, administrator of Preston County Health Department. “We honestly hope this is something we can extend beyond this grant. We hope to find ways to maybe make it an annual event. I think it will be a really good addition to services here in Preston County.”

The visits are free but if patients do have dental insurance, that information should be given so insurance can be billed. Most West Virginia children have dental insurance or the opportunity for dental insurance, if not privately, then through Medicaid.

Pregnant women who attend one of the clinics will be seen by registered dental hygienist Tiffany Summerlin, who also coordinates MCHD Smile Express. Those appointments could last up to an hour and will include an evaluation and cleaning.

“When a woman is pregnant, a flood of hormones make it more prevalent to have gum inflammation,” Summerlin said. “This leads to bleeding and tenderness, which makes oral hygiene more difficult. And there also has been some correlation relating the woman’s oral health to the outcome of her pregnancy.”

Children ages up to 18 will have an evaluation, cleaning, fluoride treatment and X-rays.
The schedule for MCHD Smile Express’ Preston County dates and locations are:

June 3: Bruceton Mills, Bruceton Fire Department  
June 4: Terra Alta, Terra Alta Fire Department  
June 5: Kingwood, Craig Civic Center  
June 10: Rowlesburg, Rowlesburg Park  
June 11: Tunnelton, Tunnelton Fire Department  
June 12: Masontown, St. Zita Church

Anyone interested in making an appointment for a pregnant woman and/or a child up to the age of 18 should contact the Preston County Health Department at 304-329-0096. The receptionist will have registration forms so people can sign up, Davis said.

Monongalia County Health Department launched Smile Express, a converted 2005 Winnebago Voyage motorhome with two dental chairs and three slide-outs, last September. It also features X-ray equipment with software that allows information to be sent back to MCHD’s full-service dental office immediately; a reception area, a bathroom, a sterilization area and a video game system to play while waiting. So far, the primary goal of Smile Express has been to provide dental care to school children in North Central West Virginia.

Smile Express was made possible by a grant from Delta Dental, with additional support from the Monongalia County Commission and Rotary Club of Cheat Lake.

Giving children oral education and a fluoride treatment can provide a big boost to their oral health that can help them reach adulthood with healthy teeth, Summerlin noted. “With the rise of sugary, sweetened beverages, the need for regular dental care, fluoride treatments and oral education has never been more important,” she said.

Davis noted that the opportunity for Preston County residents to receive dental care in their own communities instead of having to travel to Kingwood, Morgantown or Oakland, Md., is very beneficial.

“If we can take the dentist to them, there’s going to be a lot more people who will walk across the street to go to Smile Express,” he said. “The benefit will be to screen children and pregnant women that otherwise do not receive any kind of screening or seek any kind of dental care.”

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