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## PRESS RELEASE

TO: Marquette County Media

FROM: Rebecca Maino, Health Educator & Dental Hygienist

DATE: 02/07/2019

SUBJECT: February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Did you know that the average person produces a quart of saliva daily? According to the Delta Dental Foundation, that is 10,000 gallons of spit over a lifetime! Saliva is necessary for good oral health because it washes food off the teeth, neutralizes acids in your mouth, fights germs, and prevents bad breath. However, people need more than saliva to help keep their mouths healthy. Daily, your mouth is home to over 100,000,000 micro-creatures that are swimming, feeding, reproducing, and depositing waste in your mouth. If this makes you want to brush your teeth, please read on.

The February 2019 National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) is brought to you by the American Dental Association (ADA). This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers and many others. This year's NCDHM campaign slogan is "***Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile.***"

A healthy smile and good oral health is built on good prevention strategies. Early and regular dental care, fluoride use and good daily dental habits, like brushing and flossing, can maintain a healthy smile for a lifetime *and* cost far less than treatment of dental disease. That is why the ADA and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that children begin seeing a dentist at the time of the eruption of the first tooth and no later than 12 months of age. According to the AAPD, research shows that the dental costs for children who have their first dental visit by or before one year of age are 40% lower in the first five years of life, than the costs for children who do not see a dentist prior to their first birthday.

Jerry Messana, Health Officer for the Marquette County Health Department (MCHD) notes, "A child's first visit to the dentist can and should be a pleasant adventure. Tell your child that the dentist is a friendly tooth doctor who will help keep her teeth healthy. Speak to your child in an encouraging and positive way, as you would about any new experience. The better attitude you portray towards the dentist (even if you don't like visiting the dentist yourself), the better your child's first dental appointment will be."

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Dental practices have been changing and many now make an effort to ensure that your child has a “fun” first visit by one year of age. The dentist can get to know your child and introduce him or her to the dental chair, lamp, tooth counter, mouth mirror, “Mr. Thirsty Straw” and other dental instruments and equipment in a non-threatening way. This is a great way to begin a lifelong program of preventive dentistry.

Rebecca Maino, MCHD Dental Hygienist and Health Educator, reminds parents that tooth decay is an infectious disease. “Most parents do not realize that if they have lots of dental decay in their mouths, it means they also have lots of germs living in there. These germs or bacteria can be passed from a mom’s mouth (or dad’s), to her baby’s mouth when she shares a spoon to taste/test her baby’s foods, licks pacifiers, and sips from the same cup. So, one thing parents can do, if they want their children to have healthy teeth, is to limit these practices and to make sure they take care of their own teeth well.”

Starting dental visits at an early age helps prevent severe dental problems. In addition, with access to optimal fluoride through drinking water, fluoride supplements/varnish/rinses and toothpaste combined with good brushing and flossing, many children today can have little to no dental problems.

Taking care of your own teeth and making oral health a priority in your home, will teach your child to do the same. The MCHD reminds parents to make your children early and regular dental appointments. If you are struggling to find a dentist for your child or yourself, talk to your child’s doctor or call the MCHD for assistance in finding a dentist. The U.P. Friendly Smile Fund is also available for Upper Peninsula adults with no dental insurance, and whose adjusted gross income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level for the patient’s family size. Please call 1-877-313-6232 and mention the U.P. Friendly Smile Fund for financial help with the initial exam, X-Ray, and treatment plan appointment. Visit [www.mqthealth.org](http://www.mqthealth.org) or [www.mydental.org](http://www.mydental.org)

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Photo Caption: Everyone is all smiles after a fluoride varnish treatment at the Marquette County Health Department WIC Clinic. Pictured from the left are: Annette Doren, MCHD Health Educator, Kali and Seth David from Gwinn, and Rebecca Maino, RDH, MCHD Health Educator.