

On The Road Again: A Tooth Taxi Update

January 23, 2009

by Mary Daly, Program Manager, Tooth Taxi

While Dr. Heringer was in Honduras last week providing dental care to children in impoverished villages, a cadre of local dental professionals turned out in the spirit of volunteerism to keep the Tooth Taxi rolling.

John Van Leeuwen with IPA Dental Financial Planning and newly retired dentist Dr. Kurt Ferré led the week off on Tuesday. John played a key role that not many of us are qualified for: he drove the Tooth Taxi to Shaver Elementary school in the Parkrose School District in northeast Portland and then returned Friday evening to deliver the Tooth Taxi back to our home base at the ODS Plaza in Milwaukie. As Tuesday was Presidential Inauguration Day, students gathered in the gym to watch President Obama's speech. We caught bits of it on the Tooth Taxi TV and this bit of history students shared with Dr. Ferré.

Dr. Athena Bettger treated students on Wednesday. Thursday, we had two volunteers from Wilamette Dental: Ciara Barton, RDH and Dr. Chanda Scott. Pediatric dentist Dr. Andrea Beltzner joined us on Thursday and Missy Runyon from ODS also helped.

DFO board member Dr. Rick Asai and his office swarmed the Tooth Taxi on Friday. Joining Dr. Asai were assistants Bethany Spence and Kelsey Palmer, and hygienists Dominique Bryant and Vanessa Nehrkorn. Vanessa took center stage with the set up of our portable hygiene unit. The stage was the only available space the school had and it was a beehive of activity: gym classes, school breakfast and lunch sessions, recess and class line-ups for dismissal.

As always, each week is a new adventure. This week was no exception parked atop a hill with the bitter cold January winds of East Multnomah County. Troubleshooting satellite issues, vacuum issues, the need for duct tape, treating a student hurt in gym class, our first set up of the portable unit, our dental assistant Peggy Wallis' last day as she returns to Medford to be with family, and a meeting with Holly Spruance from the OEA Choice Trust to continue work on our program for school site partners.

Shaver Elementary Stats

- 70 students screened
- 54 students treated in the van
- \$16,603 value of free dental services provided.

Students identified as needing additional treatment will be scheduled for the February 27th Give Kids A Smile program.

Summary

Tooth Taxi , September 2008 - January 23, 2009

- 910 students screened
- 306 students received oral hygiene education in the classroom
- 445 students treated in the van
- \$273,431 value of free dental services provided.

Next week on the road: Sam Case Elementary School, Newport, Lincoln County school district

P.S. from our patient gallery: Open wide like an alligator. "I have an alligator at home."

