

Project Smile helping more PSD students

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Irish Elementary School first-graders Chris Garcia, 7, and Tyrell Christensen, 7, brush their teeth in class in April 2009 as class begins. Students at Irish brush their teeth every morning as part of Project Smile. / V. Richard Haro/Coloradoan library



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In its fourth year, Project Smile made a big leap helping students in the Poudre School District gain access to dental care.

Project Smile is a partnership among PSD, the North Fort Collins Business Association, Fort Collins Faith Community, the Health District of Northern Larimer County and area dentists.

Last fall, the project helped more than 1,000 students at Irish, Putnam and Laurel elementaries get much-needed dental screenings. That number almost doubled the previous year's count. Twenty-six dentists were called upon to help children in need improve their smiles.

Making an impact

Project Smile has helped several hundred students in the past three years: > **2009** - 506 students
> **2010** - 666 students
> **2011** - 1066 students

Project Smile will have a free awards luncheon open to the public April 1 at the Hilton Fort Collins to celebrate the achievement and raise awareness and funds for the program. R.S.V.P. to Perry Buck at (970) 302-4013. For more information, visit www.projectsmlfc.org.

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Since 2009, the project has gone into PSD elementary school

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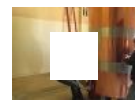
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classes to have dental hygienists from the CSU Pre-Dental Club give presentations on dental care. The students receive toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss, and they are shown how to properly use them.

"The success of the program is also due to the children brushing their teeth twice a day at school and brushing their teeth at home," Trautwein said. "The emphasis on preventative dental care has reduced the overall cavity incidence."

Along with educating kids on dental health, many of the dentists also help treat emergency cases referred to them by school nurses.

Dr. Greg Evans of Big Grins Dentistry is among the dentists who treat emergency patients.

"If there is a kid who has an immediate need, we're flexible enough to take them on," Evans said. "As a pediatric dentist, I have time set aside every day for (emergencies)."

There have been an estimated 2,500 hours of volunteer work put into the project between 2009 and 2010, Trautwein said. And this year, the project added eye care to the services.

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