

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **EL SOL PRESCHOOLERS HAVE SOMETHING NEW TO SMILE ABOUT**

**Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County** was awarded a \$12,500 grant from the Orange County Community Foundation's **Invest in Children Fund**. This fund was established with support from **Paul and Lilly Merage** and **The Orange County Children & Families Commission**. The grant will help Healthy Smiles provide preventative dental care to all El Sol Science and Arts Academy Preschool students and their siblings.

The grant will increase access to oral health care through:

- Providing on-site dental screenings and preventative care at El Sol, through the use of a retired volunteer Dentist and the Healthy Smiles staff.
- Linking children who need specialized treatment services with an appropriate dental provider in the community.
- Focusing on early prevention and detection of dental disease by conducting on-site oral health education for the Preschool students, their parents, teachers, and program staff. This will help to improve the long-term health of children at El Sol.

**All children screened who are in need of treatment will receive it.** Healthy Smiles assists families who lack dental insurance by enrolling them into a dental plan and providing required care for children who lack access to dental insurance or have special needs. These services are provided at Healthy Smiles' Smile Center in Garden Grove.

**Dental decay is a significant health problem for our County's children.** For three and four-year-olds, rates of decay are substantially higher in Orange County than for California as a whole; four-year-olds are three times as likely as children statewide to have dental decay. According to a recent survey, approximately **152,089 children in Orange County have no dental coverage.**

#### **About Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County**

*Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to improving the oral health of children in Orange County through collaborations directed at prevention, education, treatment, and advocacy. In 2005, the Children & Families Commission of Orange County provided the necessary funding for Healthy Smiles to open a dental clinic and a hands-on education center. Located at the Children's Health & Dental Center in Garden Grove, California, the Smile Center and Tooth Fairy Learning Center provide valuable programs and services that serve the children in Orange County. Through their family outreach and healthcare provider education programs, Healthy Smiles also collaborates to eliminate disparities in access to oral health prevention and treatment among Orange County's children.*

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