

# Stories That Will Make You Smile!

The Official Newsletter of

**SMILE**  
**Humboldt**



First Issue  
Fall 2025

## Greetings From Smile Humboldt!

Welcome to the first issue of Smile Humboldt's newsletter! We hope to provide important news, information and updates on the oral health happenings in Humboldt County. To submit an idea or event to be featured, please contact us at [smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us).

-The Smile Humboldt Team



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SAVE THE DATE



DECEMBER

09

**Dental Advisory Group  
DAG Meeting**  
Tuesday, Dec. 9  
noon - 1 p.m.

**EVERYONE**  
*is welcome here!*

Email for invite  
[smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us)



Humboldt County  
Department of  
Health & Human  
Services

# A Word From Our Program Coordinator



Dear Oral Health Champions:

Your Local Oral Health Program, Smile Humboldt, is celebrating a year of wins! We are excited to share some wonderful successes from the 2024–2025 school year, none of which could have happened without the support of Humboldt County's families, schools and community partners. Here are the highlights:

- Smile Humboldt screened 1,175 students across Humboldt County – 600 more students than the prior school year.
- We helped connect over 300 students to dental care on the school-based dental vans operated by Open Door and Redwoods Rural Health Center.
- More than 70% of eligible students turned in their Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) form, which was an 8% increase from the prior year.
- Oral health supplies were provided to 3,130 students through our partnership with Redwood Community Action Agency's TOOTH Program, which provided oral health lessons in 153 classes across 31 schools, grades K–8<sup>th</sup>.
- Our Brush in a Box program supported local daycares by providing dental supplies for on-site toothbrushing for 93 children under the age of five.

I had the great honor of representing Humboldt County Public Health at the Center for Oral Health's Symposium, *Oral Health & Quality of Life Among Older Adults*, in Sacramento last month. I met numerous dental professionals and advocates who had no knowledge of Humboldt County's beautiful landscape, vibrant community or our oral health access challenges. It was a privilege to shine a light on the oral health disparities that exist for California's rural residents through a presentation entitled, *Behind the Redwood Curtain: Oral Health on California's North Coast*.

It was encouraging to be in a room full of individuals committed improving oral health in California. Several dental professionals expressed their interest in visiting our county to see if it could be a place they could call home and bring much needed care to the community. Let's hope they do!

Sarah Vogel,  
Oral Health Program Coordinator  
Humboldt County DHHS Public Health



# Smile Humboldt Program Spotlight



## KINDERGARTEN ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT (KOHA)

### What is a KOHA?

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) is a state requirement passed into law in 2006 requiring children enrolled in public school for their first year (transitional kindergarten [TK], kindergarten or first grade) to have an oral health screening completed by a licensed dental professional.

### Why is the KOHA Important?

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment is a state requirement that helps schools and families know whether children are starting school with healthy teeth. Having healthy teeth is crucial to one's overall health, wellbeing, and to be open to learning— children with cavities can have trouble eating, sleeping and focusing in class. The KOHA helps identify any dental needs early, so families can get connected with care and kids can succeed both in and out of the classroom.

### How Do Families Complete the KOHA?

- First, get a KOHA form- of which is located [here](#).
- Schedule the child's dental checkup before May 2026. **The Smile Humboldt Family Program can help find a dental home for families that don't have one.**
- Bring the KOHA form to the visit and request your dentist or licensed dental professional fill it out.
- Lastly, give the completed form to child's school.

# SMILE Humboldt FAMILY

We can assist with your dental health needs!

Contact us at (707) 476-4949

[smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:smilehumboldt@co.humboldt.ca.us)

### Let's Keep the KOHA Winning Streak Going!

Humboldt County schools set a record for the number of KOHAs collected in the 2024-25 school year! Supporting the KOHA requirement is a simple way that schools can promote school readiness by identifying students suffering from untreated dental disease and helping connect families to a dental home.

98% of  
schools  
submitted KOHA  
data  
last year!

# Community Partners Update



## Dental Vans Are Coming to a School Near You!

Smile Humboldt is thrilled to continue our partnerships with the Open Door Dental Van and the Redwoods Rural Health Center Dental Van! This year, our team will be assisting with pre-screenings at local schools before the vans' arrival, helping to identify students who may need extra care.



Redwoods Rural Dental Van's Schedule and Locations for 2025:

Eagle Prairie Elementary School  
Monument Middle School



Open Door's Schedule and Locations for 2025:

Dow's Prairie Elementary: Oct. 20 – Nov. 21  
Washington Elementary: Dec. 2 – 19

These collaborations help bridge the gap between schools and dental care—dedicated to identifying and connecting students to the help and treatment that they need in a timely fashion. If you have a child in your care that attends any of the schools listed and you would like to have your child treated by the Open Door Dental Van or the Redwoods Rural Dental Van staff, please complete the New Patient Dental Packet and submit it to the school prior to the Dental Van's arrival. Smile Humboldt is deeply appreciative of Open Door and Redwoods Rural staff and their devotion to oral health care and our ever-fruitful partnership with them.

# Toothy Tips for the Season



## Sweet Tips and Tricks for Celebrating the Holidays Cavity Free

Halloween is the official kick-off to the holiday season, which is a time of the year that many of us celebrate with treats and sweets. But enjoying the holidays doesn't have to mean bad news for your teeth. Here are some simple tips and tricks to keep those smiles healthy all season long:

### 1. Choose Candy Wisely

Not all treats are equal when it comes to teeth. Candies like gummies, caramels, hard candies and sour candies are particularly tough on teeth. Chocolate is a better option since it melts in your mouth. Dark chocolate is even better because it contains less sugar than milk chocolate.

### 2. Drink Water with and After Your Treats

Encourage kids (and adults!) to sip water after enjoying sweets. Water helps wash any leftover sugar off your teeth from your holiday snacking and most importantly, water helps stop the acid attack cycle in your mouth that can cause cavities.

### 3. Continue Making Brushing and Flossing a Priority

The holidays are not the time of year to skip brushing before bed, even if you're tired from your holiday festivities. Make sure you floss and brush your teeth before you hit the hay.

### 4. Set a Candy Game Plan

Instead of letting candy hang around for weeks, create a plan. Let kids pick a few favorites each day for a set amount of time, then consider donating or trading the rest.

### 5. Don't Forget About Non-Candy Fun

The holiday season is not just about sweets! You can focus on gifting non-candy items (like stickers, or small toys) in all your festive gatherings.

The holiday season is all about enjoying good times with friends, family and indulging in our favorite seasonal goodies, but you need to keep your oral health a priority. With a little planning and good oral health habits, your family can enjoy the holidays and keep smiles cavity-free!



**For more seasonal tips on to keep your little one's smile bright this holiday season, visit: [MyChildrensTeeth.org](http://MyChildrensTeeth.org)**

# Contact Information and Acknowledgments



## Smile Humboldt Would Like To Thank Our Partners:

- The Dental Advisory Group
- The Open Door Dental Van program
- The Redwoods Rural Dental Van program
- RCAA's TOOTH program
- Humboldt County Office of Education
- The College of the Redwoods Early Childhood Education program
- Changing Tides
- The Northern California Rural Oral Health Coalition
- Public Health's SafeCare program
- RDHAPs (Erika Adams, Eva Adams and Kelly Ward) who assist us during our school-based dental screenings
- And to everyone who completed the oral health survey for our Needs Assessment update.



## **FREE TOOTHBRUSHES AND MEDI-CAL DENTAL INFO**

Smile, California's Partner Toolkit is filled with toothbrushes and promotional items to help your program, school or event better engage with and educate Medi-Cal members about their dental benefit.



**To order your toolkits, visit:**  
[\*\*Smile, California.\*\*](https://www.smilecalifornia.org)

## Stay In the Smile Loop



Follow us online for more updates, photos and upcoming events:

Facebook, X and Instagram: **@SmileHumboldt**  
Website: **SmileHumboldt.com**

Thanks for reading and thank you for your help in improving Humboldt County's oral health. Until next time- keep brushing, keep laughing and keep smiling!

- Smile Humboldt



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