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Plan, van help keep kids' teeth healthy

BY RHODA AMON

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Because of one man's vision, a new mobile dental van will bring healthier smiles to hundreds of Long Island children.

The late Horace Hagedorn knew "how important dental care is to the whole health of a child," said his widow, Amy Hagedorn. While a mobile health unit provided medical access at the Hagedorn Family Resource Center in Hempstead, she said, he was "convinced that what was lacking was dental care for needy families."

Though the Port Washington philanthropist died two years ago, his widow carried out his wish, and a 38-foot mobile unit was purchased with a \$450,000 grant from the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund.

The dental van was launched this month by the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System and the United Way of Long Island with a \$979,000 state grant for an 18-month operation.

The new van will be introduced Friday at the fifth annual "Give Kids A Smile" fair at the Cradle of Aviation Museum.

The event, part of a na-



Dr. Alec Thundercloud shows off the 38-foot dental van.

tionwide campaign by the American Dental Association, will provide free dental examinations and education for 1,800 children ages 3 to 7, said Dr. Nicholas Tucci of the Nassau County Dental Society.

More than 200 dental professionals will volunteer, coordinated by Dr. Michael Shreck.

Nationwide 51,000 volunteers will provide dental services to 500,000 low-income children at 2,000 locations.

In Suffolk, walk-in dental screening and other services will be offered to children from age 1 at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson on Friday, 8 a.m. to noon, and at the Stony Brook University

School of Dental Medicine, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The dental societies want to raise awareness that tooth decay is the No. 1 chronic disease of children and can lead to diabetes, heart disease, stroke and pulmonary disease.

A Maryland boy, Deamonte Driver, 12, died last fall when an untreated tooth infection led to a fatal brain infection.

"Children should have their first dental visit by age 1 according to the American Academy of Pediatrics," said Dr. Patricia Lewis, program director of the Pediatric Dentistry Residency program at Stony Brook.

Walk-in dental services will

also be offered at community health centers around the county.

The dental unit is part of the "Mobile Health Long Island" program strongly supported by North Shore-LIJ's chief executive Michael Dowling.

It makes twice-a-week visits to the Family Service League's Iovino South Shore Family Center in Bay Shore and to the Hagedorn Center in Hempstead run by Family and Children's Association.

Other stops will include serving migrant workers' children in Riverhead and senior communities, said Dr. Alec Thundercloud, medical director of the mobile units.

One recent Hempstead patient, Keyon Broach, 5, enjoyed going up and down on the "spaceship chair," said his grandfather, James Darrell Broach, 75, of Uniondale.

Dr. Sukrita Matta found that Keyon had two cavities and booked a return visit.

For more information on "Give Kids a Smile" day, call 516-775-3737 in Nassau; 631-632-8889 for the Stony Brook program, and 631-474-6332 for the St. Charles dental clinic.



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / KAREN WILES STABLE

Keyon Broach sits in the "spaceship chair" while Dr. Sukrita Matta cleans his teeth inside the new mobile dental van.