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Hundreds of kids, policymakers, Delta Dental will focus on efforts to improve oral health across Mic

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OKEMOS, Mich., (July 29, 2013) — Delta Dental of Michigan, hundreds of kids, representatives of Gov. Rick Snyder, and others will recognize the state's ongoing commitment — and announce new efforts — to improve oral health care for children and adults across Michigan at the July 30 Lansing Lugnuts baseball game.

About 500 Mid-Michigan children will attend the game courtesy of Delta Dental. In addition, all children entering the ballpark that night will receive backpacks from the Delta Dental Foundation. The backpacks are stuffed with back-to-school items and oral health information designed to help families get their children's smiles school-ready.

Along with these activities, Delta Dental will present the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) with a \$272,000 check for programs such as community water fluoridation and sealant clinics throughout Michigan. With tooth decay still topping the list as the most common chronic childhood disease in the nation, these programs are essential components in the effort to fight tooth decay and will help thousands of children smile a little brighter.

A new Brighter Futures website will also debut on July 30. Brighter Futures is an ongoing initiative supported by partner organizations committed to improving the oral health of all Michigan citizens. The initiative has a special focus on children, seniors, expectant mothers, and other at-risk populations. The website (www.BrighterFuturesMI.com) includes information about philanthropic, education and public policy activities that will improve oral health in Michigan. In the coming months and years, the website will serve as an information hub for advocacy activities to improve public health policies that can improve oral health.

"Poor oral health can have life-altering effects on a person," said Laura Czelada, president and CEO of Delta Dental. "Educating people on the importance of good oral health and its connection to overall health can significantly improve a person's well-being and quality of life."

On a national scale, it's estimated that children miss 51 million hours of school each year because of problems with their teeth. In addition, adults miss 164 million hours of work each year because of time spent dealing with their own dental health issues.

"Access to care can mean the difference between a student graduating from high school or whether or not an adult gets a job," Czelada said. "It's so important to visit the dentist at any age. For kids, a visit to the dentist before school starts can mean better success in the classroom all year long."

In the past two years, the state Legislature and Gov. Rick Snyder have approved funding to provide [dental coverage](#) under a program called Healthy Kids Dental (HKD) to tens of thousands of low-income Michigan children. HKD will expand to Ingham and other counties as of October 1, 2013. In addition, the state continues to support access to fluoridated water supplies in local communities and dental sealants that prevent cavities and other [dental problems](#).

But more needs to be done because far too many Michigan children and adults do not have access to regular and preventive oral health care.

"As a state and as a corporate citizen, we need to focus more on policies and actions to prevent oral health problems before they start," said Czelada. "All too often, people only see a dentist when their teeth start hurting. In the end, this takes a toll not only on the pocket book, but on one's overall health. We have to look at better ways to help educate and provide care earlier to reduce the impact of oral disease."

The kids (and their parents) attending the July 30 Lugnuts game are from Mid-Michigan organizations including the Information Technology Empowerment Center (ITEC), Big Brothers Big Sisters, Capital Area District Library, and Lansing Parks and Recreation.

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[Delta Dental of Michigan](#), with its affiliates in Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee collectively are among the largest dental plan administrators in the nation. In 2012, the enterprise paid out nearly \$3 billion for dental treatment to 11 million enrollees. Offices are located in Okemos and Farmington Hills, Mich.; Sherwood and Little Rock, Ark.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Louisville, Ky.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C.; Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, Ohio; and Nashville, Knoxville and Memphis, Tenn.

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