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**Fluoride is focus of two school-based programs coming to Flint, Genesee County**

***Delta Dental Foundation providing $204K to state, Mott Children’s Health Center***

**Flint, Mich. —** Local and state officials gathered at Flint Community Schools’ Doyle/Ryder Elementary School this afternoon to announce two new programs designed to improve the oral health of children in the Flint area.

The first, a school-based fluoride rinse program will serve up to 6,000 children in Flint. The second is a fluoride varnish program which will serve up to 2,000 students attending Head Start programs in Genesee County.

Both programs are offered through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Mott Children’s Health Center and funded by $204,000 from the Delta Dental Foundation. With parent approval, children in grades K-6 will receive fluoride mouth rinse at school and children in Head Start programs will receive fluoride varnish applications.

“Mott Children’s Health Center is committed to helping children prevent tooth decay,” said Carol Lutey, Director for Child and Adolescent Dentistry at Mott Children’s Health Center. “We are very pleased to work with Flint and surrounding school districts as well as Genesee County Head Start Programs to accomplish this large task. The fluoride rinse and varnish programs are safe and effective interventions for children who do not get enough fluoride in their drinking water.”

Because children, especially those under the age of 6, are drinking more bottled water or may be drinking sugar-sweetened beverages which don’t include fluoride, the programs are designed to help students receive the daily benefits of fluoride to protect their teeth from cavities.

“The Delta Dental Foundation is pleased to be able to fund these two programs,” said Teri Battaglieri, Delta Dental Foundation director. “Fluoride is very important for good oral health. It helps to prevent tooth decay which is the most common chronic childhood illness in the United States.”

The pilot set for June 1 is for K-6 students enrolled in the Flint Community Schools summer programs. The Head Start program will begin in the fall.

The fluoride rinse program will expand to surrounding schools later in the year.

The programs will be evaluated for effectiveness by a team at the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit.

“Our priority remains on ensuring that children and families in Flint have access to all of the health services they need,” said Nick Lyon, director of the MDHHS. “These programs made possible by our partnership with the Delta Dental Foundation are vital as we move forward in providing Flint residents with access to good, healthy resources.”

Immediately following the announcement Monday, Doyle/Ryder students enjoyed the interactive oral health musical, “I Need My Teeth” offered by Indiana-based McMillen Health and funded by the Delta Dental Foundation.

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