Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children: The Foundation of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry supports community-based initiatives that provide Dental Homes to children from families who cannot afford dental care.

Dr. Ned Savide
HSHC President

Pediatric Dentists’ Generosity Worth Millions

Pediatric dentists have always struck me as exceptional. Yes, I’m biased, having practiced nearly 40 years, but I’ve got new evidence that proves it.

We shared details in the September PDT about member generosity based on an AAPD membership survey report received earlier this year. Specifically, we asked members about the pro bono care they provide in the United States and we learned that 81 percent of our members provided some type of free dental care last year. That’s not write-offs, Medicaid rates, or international mission trips; but planned, no-charge dental care provided by our members in the United States.

Maybe the actual percentage was a little higher than I might have expected, but we are a generous bunch. In fact, the Southeast District is the top of the heap with 88 percent of our members in that district reporting providing some type of pro bono care. Eighty-eight percent!

This, however, isn’t the exceptional part. Where we really shine is when we compare pediatric dentists’ volunteer time to the U.S. national average.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) reports 25.3 percent of U.S. adults participated in some type of volunteer activity in 2014, valued at $23.56 an hour.

The CNCS statistics made us take a different look at the pro bono information shared with us by our members. If the value of U.S. volunteer time on average is $184 billion a year, the combined value of our members’ pro bono care last year was $64.8 million. That’s not a bad slice of the pie for a profession our size.

More important, AAPD members on average provide pro bono care to as many as 53 children, which means our members collectively provided care for at least 429,000 kids last year.

Yes, the membership survey results were self-reported and, yes, the dollar values reported were estimates, but it’s a staggering impact nonetheless. I’m bursting with pride.

This all is terrific news, but we want to know more. Starting this month, HSHC staff will be reaching out to a small number of randomly-selected members seeking their participation in focus groups at regional and state dental meetings around the country. If you’re invited to join in one of these focus groups, I urge you, please participate.

Second, don’t be shy! Drop us a note and tell us what you’re doing. Send a quick e-mail to HSHC Donor Relations Assistant Cristine McDowell at cmcdowellR@aapd.org. We’ll follow up with you so we can learn more.

Finally, keep an eye out for more news about volunteering and volunteer opportunities through Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children. We know our members have a lot going on in their personal, professional and volunteer lives, but as the old saying goes, “If you want something done, give it to a busy person.”

Thank you for all you do to help children everywhere! I’m proud to be a member of our generous profession.