

From: [tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org) on behalf of [Oral Health Kansas](http://Oral Health Kansas)

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ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

Weekly Wednesday Update

*Our Mission:  
To improve oral health  
in Kansas through  
advocacy,  
public awareness  
and education.*

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## Dental Champions Corner:

The new [Dental Champions website](#) features the story of how the Dental Champions Leadership Program changed the impact a northeast Kansas dental hygienist has on her community.

## Heartspring and Topeka Correctional Facility Recognized

During last months' Excellence in Oral Health Awards Luncheon, Oral Health Kansas recognized the contributions of two organizations in promoting oral health for underserved Kansans. Heartspring was recognized as the 2013 Outstanding Organization, and Kathy Heerwald and the students at the Topeka Correctional Facility dental lab were honored as 2013 Outstanding Volunteer.

### Kathy Heerwald and the Students at the Topeka Correctional Facility Dental Lab

The Outstanding Volunteer Award is presented to a volunteer who is not a dental clinician, but who has demonstrated a positive difference in an organization. An outstanding volunteer is someone who saw a problem and got involved to find a solution.

The Dental Technician Program at the [Topeka Correctional Facility](#) is designed to provide women inmates with education and hands-on experience in denture-making, to help them better support themselves and their families upon their release. The dentures they create are provided to medically-underserved patients of the KAMU safety net clinics of Kansas. The dental



Read about Krista Hahn, RDH,  
ECP III (Class 5) at  
[www.ksdentalchampions.org](http://www.ksdentalchampions.org)



## Children need help brushing

Young children don't have the fine motor skills until around age 7 or 8 (when they can tie their shoelaces without help) to brush their teeth well. But, to help young children form healthy habits, it's good for them to brush their teeth with an adult supervising.

According to the [Office of Head Start's National Center on Health](#), an adult should thoroughly brush the child's teeth at least once a day (in the morning or before bed).

lab is such an exciting program because, through these clinics, offenders can help provide good-quality and affordable dentures to individuals who cannot afford them.



In 2011, Kathy Heerwald, the Dental Lab's Administrative Specialist, asked the students if they would be interested in putting together roughly 800 holiday toothbrush gift bags for all the inmates at the correctional facility. When they said yes, Kathy contacted the Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation about the availability of toothbrushes, toothpastes and flosses. Since that time, and with the blessings of the Topeka Correctional Facility and the instructor, Dr. Tomas Co, the program has expanded to include gift bags for many women and children in need in Topeka.

Each year the Dental Lab students, with the support of Dr. Co and Kathy, put together more than 2,000 holiday gift bags to be distributed to women incarcerated Topeka Correctional Facility, women participating in the Topeka - Moving Ahead Program, and women and children at the Topeka YWCA Women's Shelter. Each gift bag, through the generosity of the Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation, contains a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss, and is decorated with ribbon and a holiday greeting from the TCF Dental Lab and Delta Dental.

The Dental Lab students have a strong desire to give back to the community, and they spend several days each fall assembling these bags for delivery during the holiday season. They do this while maintaining their on-going, normal responsibilities of denture-making and studying. They are delighted to help others in



Some things to watch for when helping children brush:

- Holding the toothbrush. Can the child hold the toothbrush firmly and bring it to his or her mouth? Is the handle too thin? Is the child able to close his or her hand over the handle?
- Brushing and having teeth brushed. Can the child keep his or her mouth open during brushing? Does the child gag when a toothbrush is in his or her mouth? Can the child hold still when an adult is helping brush the child's teeth? Can the child place and move the toothbrush over all of the tooth surfaces when brushing?
- Using toothpaste. Does the child dislike some toothpaste flavors? Does the child dislike how the toothpaste feels in his or her mouth? Is the child able to spit toothpaste out? Does the child swallow the toothpaste?
- Brushing safely. Can the child brush his or her teeth without hurting the mouth, tongue, or gums?

It is important to know what is working and not working well in brushing a child's teeth. Then Head Start staff or parents can reinforce good habits and help address any problems.

this manner, and are aware that, for some women, this gift bag will be the only gift they receive during the holidays. The students are warmed by the thank-you notes they receive from recipients, and the notes confirm to them how good doing good feels. They are pleased to promote oral health, literally, one smile at a time.

### **Heartspring**

The Outstanding Organization Award is presented to an organization that is distinguished from others in excellence in promoting oral health awareness in Kansas, and this year the award was presented to a Wichita disability service organization founded in 1934.



[Heartspring](#) teaches children with disabilities the life skills they need to succeed at the activities of daily life, thereby increasing individual independence and quality of life. The primary target audience for Heartspring is children with autism. This group of children is one of the hardest to teach appropriate dental habits for life.

The medical group at Heartspring has made dental hygiene a priority for their students over the last several years. They have accomplished this by educating direct care staff about the impact oral health can have on overall quality of life. Heartspring teaches students to brush and floss daily and provides opportunities to practice brushing three times each day. Because of this commitment, the return on their investment of

## Did You Know...

Less than 65% of Kansans have access to fluoridated drinking water. Learn about the fluoridation in your county in Oral Health Kansas's new [2013 Kansas Oral Health Snapshot](#).



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time in teaching about oral health has been immeasurable.

Many children come to Heartspring with few skills related to brushing their own teeth. Lori Neel, manager of the medical group at Heartspring, said, "From day one, we start teaching them these life-long skills and never lower that expectation. Most become independent in these skills for life."

Heartspring has trained all its staff in oral health and invests time and money to ensure each child can brush as independently as possible. They also helped other disability service providers by working with Oral Health Kansas to film a series of videos about teaching people with autism tooth brushing skills. These videos feature Heartspring Occupational Therapist Tim Koontz and are available on the [Oral Health Kansas website](#).

If you have an idea, story or suggestion for a Oral Health Kansas Weekly Wednesday Update please contact us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).

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Oral Health Kansas | 800 SW Jackson | Ste. 1120 | Topeka | KS | 66612