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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:

Congratulations to Kyle Kessler (Class 3) who has been named the new Executive Director of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers. Kyle began work at the Association last week after serving as the executive vice president for



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released the 2012 water fluoridation statistics, measuring the number of people on public water systems who benefit from fluoridated drinking water. About 2.7 million Kansans rely on community water systems, but only 63.6 percent of them benefit from optimally fluoridated water. This means that over 1 million people who could be served by fluoride are not receiving this preventive public health intervention.

According to the CDC, "Water fluoridation prevents tooth decay mainly by providing teeth with frequent contact with low levels of fluoride throughout each day and throughout life. Even today, with other available sources of fluoride, studies show that water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by about 25 percent over a person's lifetime."

The positive effects of fluoride--preventing and reversing tooth decay--are especially necessary for populations without regular access to oral

public affairs with KVC Behavioral Health.

Read more about the Association and Kyle's new role in this story from the [Kansas Health Institute's News Service](#).



## Holiday Schedule

The Oral Health Kansas office will be closed on December 24, 25 and January 1. Staff may be out of the office on additional days throughout the holiday week. Phone and email messages will be returned as soon as possible.



## Children need help brushing

Young children don't have the

health care. According to Dr. Paul Kittle, a pediatric dentist from Leavenworth, KS, "Cavities continue to increase in children, especially in those areas without water fluoridation, and lead to unnecessary pain, discomfort, absence from school, and significant costs to parents and society. "

"Water fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure in use today because of its unique ability to decrease the risk of dental cavities, the most common infectious disease in the world."

Still, Kansas ranks 35th in the percentage of its population with optimally fluoridated water. Every surrounding state bested Kansas in the rankings-Missouri ranked 26th, Nebraska was 30th, Oklahoma was 32nd, Colorado came in at 28th and Iowa topped the list at 12th.

Dr. Kittle speculates that Kansas ranks low because of "misinformation and scare tactics," a fact he finds very disturbing. "To deny the general public a significant health benefit because they've heard misinformation, scare tactics and non-scientific garbage does a great disservice to the citizens, especially the children, of Kansas."

The data are compiled biennially from the CDC's Water Fluoridation Reporting System (WFRS). States use the database to ensure the quality of their water fluoridation systems.

Learn more about water fluoridation in Kansas at [www.fluoridekansas.org](http://www.fluoridekansas.org).

## Judy Johnston and Dr. Kathy Weno honored for their service

Oral Health Kansas recognized the contributions of two organizations outstanding leaders in the oral health community last month during the Excellence in Oral Health Awards. Former state dental director Dr. Kathy Weno was awarded 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).



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

Bob Bethell Award for Outstanding Policymaker, and Judy Johnston was recognized with the Outstanding Community Leader Award.

**The 2013 Bob Bethell Award for Outstanding Policy Maker was awarded to Dr. Katherine Weno and the Bureau of Oral Health.** As the first director of the Bureau of Oral Health, Dr. Weno showed tremendous initiative, insight, and political savvy as she built the agency to a staff of three full time assistants and two half time dental hygienists.

Under her leadership, the Bureau of Oral Health accomplished many public health achievements and conducted numerous studies:

- The Bureau administered numerous public oral health programs like the workforce recruitment center, fluoride varnish instruction for medical providers, programs that increase access for children with special needs, and a sealant program in 351 schools.
- The Bureau conducted many surveys like the 2011 Dental Desert Assessment, 2012 Elder Smiles Survey, and Hospital-Owned Dental Practice Feasibility Study.
- The Bureau supported policy changes like expanded practice for dental hygienists, expanded outreach for the school sealant program, employment of dentists by hospitals, and Medicaid reimbursement for caries risk assessment and preventive services for adults.



Dr. Weno left Kansas this fall and now serves as the dental director of the Centers for Disease Control. She leaves the Bureau of Oral Health a strong, effective, well-respected organization with a network of oral health partners across the state.

**Judy Johnston, MS, RD/LD, was honored**

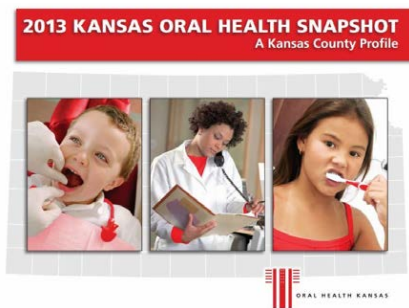
able to spit toothpaste out? Does the child swallow the toothpaste?

- 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.

## Did You Know...

17,500 Kansans visit emergency rooms with dental pain each year. Learn more in the [2013 Kansas Oral Health Snapshot](#).



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### as the 2013 Outstanding Community Leader.

Judy has a long history of concern and activity in support of oral health in Kansas. She was actively involved in the early work led by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund to develop a state-level oral health advocacy organization. She participated in the First Annual Oral Health Kansas Conference and she served on the Board of Oral Health Kansas in those early years.

In spring 2007, Judy facilitated the development of the Wichita Sedgwick County Oral Health Coalition, including development of their strategic plan and logic model using an evidence base for their coalition framework. She continues serving in an active leadership role in the Wichita coalition. In 2008, Judy and other Wichita coalition members developed and implemented a community-based model for a Give Kids a Smile event in Wichita in which they served nearly 200 children in a one-day event. She has continued to provide leadership for this annual event that has now served over 1,100 uninsured children.



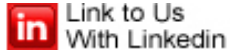
Over the years, Judy recruited colleagues to join her in oral health research in Kansas. She has identified and recruited community partners to join the oral health cause, as evidenced by the sustained activities of the Wichita coalition. Judy has partnered

with the KDHE Bureau of Oral Health to provide support for their initiatives and to initiate further research in Kansas. By bringing oral health research dollars into Kansas, she has provided funding for community partners to continue their work while also providing evaluation data to inform further growth and development.

Judy has been a key oral health leader at the local, state and national levels for many years,

and we look forward to working with her to ensure Kansas remains a leader at the local, state and national levels for many years to come.

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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