



ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION

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OHK staff member, Sonia, is pictured here with a mother smiling from ear to ear! She received dental services at the Kansas Mission of Mercy (KMOM). We had overheard her daughter say, "my mom hasn't smiled like this in a long time". We were excited to get a picture of her so she could show off her beautiful smile!

KMOM offered people the chance to share

On January 27-28, the Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation hosted the 16th Kansas Mission of Mercy (KMOM) in Manhattan. Over 1,000 patients received care valued at \$1.1 million. [According to the Foundation](#), this was a small turnout of patients, but that meant that everyone who sought services was seen and that people were able to receive more comprehensive care than in years past.

Among the hundreds of volunteers at the annual event were Oral Health Kansas staff members, Board members and other volunteers. The spirit of service at KMOM this year extended beyond the significant work the volunteers put into it. KMOM inspired not only the people who traveled to volunteer at the event, but also the people who sought dental care. Two stories of sharing touched the hearts of the Oral Health Kansas staff who had the chance to witness it.



February: National Children's Dental Health Month

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. This year's slogan is "Choose Tap Water for a Sparkling Smile". During this time, dental professionals, health care providers and educators, remind families of the importance to having good oral health. Drinking tap water with fluoride leads to better oral health.



Drinking fluoridated water keeps teeth strong and reduces cavities (also called tooth decay) by about 25% in children and adults ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)).

People lined up to receive dental services the night before the clinic opened, and it was a cold night, with temperatures below freezing. One young woman was very cold, and a stranger standing next to her offered his coveralls. She graciously accepted his offer and was able to stay warm until the doors opened. She was finished with her dental treatment before her new friend was, and she waited over an hour for him to finish in order to return the coveralls. Each of them gave up something to help a stranger, and they inspired us with their selfless acts.



Early Saturday morning, a fourteen-year-old boy named Hezekiah and parents came to the KMOM clinic for dental services. As they were waiting in line, Hezekiah joined the volunteers who were keeping people's spirits up by dancing. After he and his parents were finished with their dental work, he asked if he could stay for the rest of the day to volunteer. His parents agreed, and he registered as a volunteer and donned one of the purple volunteer shirts. Hezekiah spent the afternoon and early

Here are tips to remind children and families on how to keep their teeth healthy!

- Use a pea-sized dab of an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to remove plaque.
- Choose healthy foods and beverages, such as tap water!
- Go to the dentist for your checkups.

Reserve a sugary drink display now!

Our sugary drink display is so popular, all of our February slots are booked! Don't wait to reserve yours for the upcoming months. We have a limited amount of drink displays therefore reserving yours ahead of time is crucial for a guaranteed slot. [Sign up now!](#)

Our sugary drink display contains 10 popular beverages and shows how much sugar is in each. The display is free to use, up to a month and we reimburse postage. Reserve a display for your health fair, clinic, school event or child care!



evening delivering food, putting away chairs, cleaning dental chairs, and doing anything else he could to be helpful. By the end of the day, he had begun making plans to volunteer at the next Mission of Mercy in both Missouri and Kansas. Hezekiah is a young man with a rare dedication to service, and his volunteer spirit was an inspiration to so many people that day.



House considers tobacco taxes

On January 31, the House Committee on Taxation held a hearing on the Governor's proposed increase in tobacco taxes. Oral Health Kansas provided [written testimony](#) supporting both the increase of \$1.00 per pack of cigarettes and doubling of the tax on other tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco. The evidence is clear that significant increases in tobacco taxes not only boost state revenue, but also lead to people to either give up using tobacco or not start using it.

Both cigarette smoking and smokeless tobacco are linked closely with cancer



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and premature death. According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center, most people who are diagnosed with oral cancer are tobacco users, and more than half of people who are diagnosed with oral cancer will not survive it. The most common users of smokeless tobacco are young people age 18 to 25, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimates the number of young people using smokeless tobacco would decrease by over 44% if the tobacco tax is increased.

Oral Health Kansas not only supports public policy that will limit people's exposure to tobacco, but also state revenue that is balanced, equitable and sustainable. As the tax committees consider increases in tobacco taxes this year, we will stand in support of the increases. Contact your legislators to let them know you believe increases in tobacco taxes will save lives and give our state's budget a much-needed boost in revenue.



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