



# ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION

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## Dental Champions Corner

Chris Steege (Class 7), Executive Director of the Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, received the AAP Outstanding Medium Chapter Award last week in Chicago. Congratulations to Chris who has served as the chapter's executive director for the past 26 years.



## SB 233 Could reduce in oral cancer in Kansas

On March 24, the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee heard testimony about Governor Brownback's proposal to increase the tobacco and liquor taxes. The tax proposal is part of the Governor's approach to filling the \$700 million budget gap in the next year, but it also would have a profound impact on the health of Kansans.

The bill would increase the state's cigarette tax by \$1.50 per pack, as well as increase the tax on other tobacco products (which includes smokeless tobacco) from 10 percent of the wholesale price to 25 percent. The "other tobacco products," also known as "OTP" tax has not been increased since 1972. Increases in tobacco taxes reliably produce two results: an increase in state revenue and a decrease in tobacco users.

Oral Health Kansas joined other health advocates in **testifying in favor of the bill**. According to the Oral Cancer Foundation, every hour of every day, one person dies of oral or pharyngeal cancer. Smokeless tobacco is a notorious and deadly carcinogen. Only half of people diagnosed with oral cancer survive. Kansas' OTP tax rate is among the lowest in the nation, and Oral Health Kansas urged the committee to increase it now.

Representatives of the tobacco, cigar and

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## Special Enrollment Period for Tax Season Open

The special enrollment period will allow those individuals and families who were unaware or didn't understand the implications of this new requirement, the shared responsibility payment, to enroll in 2015 health insurance coverage through the Federally-facilitated Marketplaces (FFM). **This period of enrollment began March 15 and goes through April 30, 2015.**

Kansans who want to find a Navigator or other assister in their area can visit [www.insureks.org](http://www.insureks.org). These Cover Kansas Navigators have completed training with CMS, passed background checks and are available at trusted community organizations around our state.

Check out [this flyer from Cover Kansas](#) for more information and to see who is eligible for this enrollment period.

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## Children's Dental Health Grant Opportunity

The **ADA Foundation** is accepting applications for the Samuel D. Harris Fund for Children's Dental Health. The grant program is named for noted pediatric dentist and philanthropist Dr. Samuel D. Harris who passed away in 2003 and is designed to bestow grants on organizations dedicated to fighting children's dental disease for prenatal and postnatal oral health

liquor industry lobbied against the bill. Cigar lobbyists, in particular noted that cigars are not addictive, but they would be subject to the OTP tax. Oral Health Kansas argued that cigars may not be addictive, but smokeless tobacco is both highly addictive and deadly.

The Senate committee is not likely to take action on this bill until later in the session. Advocates are encouraged to contact both Senators and Representatives and ask them to save lives by increasing the cigarette and OTP tax rates this year.

Read more about the hearing in this [Kansas Health Institute News Service article](#).



**Reagan Cussimano, American Cancer Society Concern Action Network, said the proposed tobacco tax increase would save lives. Photo from the KHI News Service.**

## Medicaid Expansion is still on the table

Last week, the House Health and Human Services Committee held two days of hearings on Medicaid expansion. By expanding the Kansas Medicaid program known as KanCare, as many as 150,000 low-income Kansans would gain access to Medicaid coverage of health and dental care. The Legislature has not taken action on a Medicaid expansion proposal yet, but the issue is on the table for consideration during the 2015 Legislative Session.

Twenty-eight states have expanded their Medicaid so far, and Kansas remains one of the twenty-two states that has not. Several

instruction for agencies that sponsor new parents and caregivers to reduce the incidence of early childhood caries. There will be 23 grants available of up to \$5,000 each. **The grant deadline is April 10th.** This grant and other grants can be viewed [here](#).

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## Traveling Sugary Drink Display

Don't forget to reserve our traveling sugary drink display for your event! Our display shows how much sugar is in a variety of your favorite drinks, emphasizing which drinks are good and bad for you.



This display is completely free, and return shipping costs are reimbursed by Oral Health Kansas. Learn more [on our website](#) and [email Sarah](#) if you are interested in hosting the display!

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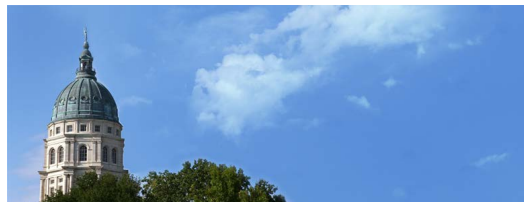
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states are experimenting with innovative models of Medicaid expansion that includes such features as incentives for job training and cost-sharing. The Kansas Hospital Association is leading efforts to push for a Medicaid expansion model in Kansas. [Contact your legislators](#) to ask them to support Medicaid expansion through KanCare 2.0.

Learn more about a Medicaid expansion alternative model in Indiana from this [Kansas Health Institute Issue Brief](#).



## Join In: WSU Dental Day

Wichita State University Advanced Education in General Dentistry Program is hosting a Dental Day for students interested in a career in dentistry. Dental Day is a great opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in the field of dentistry and dental hygiene. This camp is geared toward high school students interested in the field of dentistry, including dental hygiene and dental assisting.

This program will be held Friday, June 26, and registration closes June 1st or until all spots are filled. Find out more about this opportunity at the [Dental Day website!](#)



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