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NATIONAL DRIVE LAUNCHED TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEER DENTISTS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

As we all know, children in need are at greatly increased risk of developing severe tooth decay. Almost half of Australia's six year olds have cavities in their baby teeth. And our 12 year olds have worse dental health than children in Hong Kong, the Netherlands, England, Wales and Switzerland to name but a few.¹

In response to this problem, Colgate has launched '**Bright Smiles**' - a national pilot program that aims to recruit hundreds of volunteer dentists to treat children in need. The program is being organised with charity campaigner Jon Dee, and is launched this week as the flagship initiative of Oral Health Month.

Over the coming weeks, these volunteer practitioners and their staff will be matched with kids from families who are doing it tough. **The children will then be treated free of charge.**

Dentists can register to volunteer or find out more information at www.brightsmiles.net.au

Dr Nick Hocking of Dental Care Network is one of the dentists involved in '**Bright Smiles**' and has treated brothers 10 year old Caleb and 13 year old Jerson Hidalgo of Campbelltown. "Dental practitioners see the effects of poor oral health every day," said Dr Hocking.

"Tooth and gum disease can lead to pain, tooth loss, poor nutrition, unsettled sleep, reduced performance at school, and health and social problems. '**Bright Smiles**' gives the dental community the opportunity to improve the health and life chances of children who've had limited access to dental care. I strongly urge my colleagues to join up and help a kid in need.

"We also get to send an important message to all Australians: for a smile that lasts a lifetime follow the four easy steps – brush, floss, rinse with mouthwash and get regular check ups."

Dr Barbara Shearer of Colgate said, "with help from the dental community we aim to put a healthy smile back on the faces of hundreds of kids who need dental care. During Oral Health Month in August, we will be writing to over 8,500 dentists in Australia asking them to lend a hand".

Well known Play School presenter and actress Brooke Satchwell has donated her time to front the campaign's TV Announcement.



Volunteer dentist Dr Nick Hocking with Jerson (left) & Caleb Hidalgo
Photo credit: Ross Coffey/Woman's Day

EDITOR'S NOTE: Press photos can be downloaded and the TV Community Service Announcement can be viewed at www.brightsmiles.net.au/media

For further information, contact Kerin Vandeleur on 02 9818 0984 or 0404 831 253.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2002 Child Dental Health Survey, Nov 2007.