

## Deschutes County Begins Oral Health Program Through Grant

*by Bend Weekly News Sources*

The Deschutes County Health Department has been awarded \$2,500 from the Oregon Dental Foundation to help begin the Deschutes County Oral Health Program. The Oral Health Education and Prevention Program would benefit pregnant women and children up to age 36 months. Typically, low-income, underinsured and uninsured pregnant women and children do not get comprehensive oral health education and prevention. The Oregon Dental Foundation grant will fund the dental program for an entire year of service and after evaluation of the Program, if successful, it may be continued. The clinics are scheduled to begin immediately in the Deschutes County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics in Bend, Redmond, and La Pine. Deschutes County Health will conduct four clinics per month (two in Bend, one in Redmond and one in La Pine; clinics will also be held at the local Teen Parent Program and El Programa de Ayuda. The Deschutes County Oral Health Program would be managed by the County's Maternal Child Health (MCH) and WIC departments. "Our goal for the Program is to assist these families in getting access to dental care through referrals and to help them secure a dental home," said Dan Peddycord, Deschutes County Health Department Director. In February of 2006, The Journal of Dental Research reported, "as little as one fluoride treatment a year can cut the cavity rate in half for infants and small children." On the Department of Health and Human Services website (<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/>), it states that pregnant women are at risk for pregnancy gingivitis, a gum disease. These women are more prone to have low birth weight babies or premature births. The purpose of the new Program would be to reach low-income, underserved pregnant women and children 0-36 months in Deschutes County, and the Health Department is in a unique position to be able to reach this population. Through the new Program, these families would receive oral health education and prevention, referrals, hygiene packets, and fluoride varnish applications. The Oregon Dental Foundation (<http://www.oregondentalfoundation.org/>) was established in 1982 to improve the lives of Oregonians by increasing the quality and quantity of dental health, education and scientific knowledge. The Foundation funds community projects such as non-profit clinics or other facilities that render dental care to the disadvantaged and underwrites educational opportunities that provide a broader understanding and greater enhancement of the art and science of dentistry. The Foundation also supports qualified endeavors to provide information to the public that would elevate dental health. For more information about the Deschutes County Oral Health Education and Prevention Program, please call 322-7420.

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