



MEDIA RELEASE
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Contact:
Hanah Smith
Phone: 617-933-5274
E-mail: hsmith@solomonmccown.com

**DentaQuest Foundation Grants in Florida
Strengthen Oral Health Safety Net,
Tackle Oral Health Awareness**

February 9, 2010 –The DentaQuest Foundation is making a major investment to improve oral health for Florida’s children and youth, and working in partnership with champions for health throughout the state to provide dental care services to the uninsured, and improve oral health literacy and awareness in Florida.

The Foundation recently awarded six grants totaling \$477,378 in Florida: \$135,000 to the **FrameWorks Institute** and \$85,000 to **More Health, Inc.** for statewide oral health awareness; \$150,000 to **Florida Public Health Institute** to support the development of Oral Health Coalitions that promote sustainable solutions for better oral health; and \$50,000 each to **Borinquen Health Care Center** and **Community Health of South Florida**, as well as \$7,378 to **Health Choice Network, Inc.** to preserve the dental Safety Set and increase the number of vulnerable children served.

Together, these grants support a multi-year and multi-pronged strategy for raising oral health awareness throughout the state and providing the technical assistance and services needed to strengthen Florida’s Dental Safety Net which provides for the state’s underinsured populations.

In addition to these Foundation grants, the **DentaQuest Institute** is part of the **Health Foundation of South Florida’s** five-year \$7 million oral health initiative to increase access to oral health services in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. In tough economic times, safety net dental care providers experience dramatic growth in the number of individuals and families seeking services. The DentaQuest Institute’s Safety Net Solutions (SNS) program has been successful in helping health centers nationally prepare for and manage the demand for their services so they are better able to help more people in need of care.

“Progress in addressing oral health disparities requires the support and engagement of the entire community. Equipped with effective tools and knowledge, community leaders, parents, health care providers, educators and the general public can more easily tackle oral health problems,” explains Ralph Fuccillo, DentaQuest Foundation President. “We applaud the statewide response to gaps in access and feel certain that these grants will further Florida’s statewide efforts to improve oral health.”

Dental disease --tooth decay-- is the most common chronic childhood disease. It is also completely preventable with proper care. Yet in 2008, more than one-third of Florida’s children ages 1-17 years old did not have a single dentist’s visit according to the Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts. This is coupled with the fact that as America’s economic situation remains volatile, safety net dental practices across the state are struggling to provide quality care for the nation’s most vulnerable people while maintaining sufficient financial performance to keep their practices open.

These grants support the mission of the DentaQuest Foundation to strengthen community initiatives and strategies, to strengthen the dental care safety net, and to increase access to care for vulnerable children and their families.

About the DentaQuest Foundation

The DentaQuest Foundation is committed to optimal oral health for all Americans through its support of prevention and access to affordable oral health care, and through its partnerships with funders, policy makers and community leaders. For more information please visit dentaquestfoundation.org.

About the DentaQuest Foundation Grants

Borinquen Health Care Center, Community Health of South Florida, and Health Choice Network, Inc. are working to increase the number of children getting preventative and restorative dental care by engaging kids in portable, school-based oral health services that will be piloted in more than 30 schools in Southern Florida. Borinquen Health Care Center, Community Health of South Florida are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) which are the health safety net for vulnerable individuals and families in the area.

The Frameworks Institute, More Health, Inc. and the Florida Oral Health Coalitions will be supported in increasing community understanding of dental disease as a preventable health condition that interferes with learning, eating and daily life activities, especially in children, as they use new media and technology skills to engage the public in statewide oral health solutions. They will also work with an array of organizations—ranging from policymakers, health care providers, hospital groups, and educational entities to child welfare advocacies—to prioritize oral health as a critical component of health.

About the DentaQuest Institute and Safety Net Solutions

The DentaQuest Institute engages in oral health quality improvement research and, through the Safety Net Solutions program, provides technical assistance that contributes to more effective and efficient oral health care delivery. In Miami-Dade and Broward counties, Safety Net Solutions is working with **Community Smiles**, a community health center staffed by volunteers; **Care Resource**, a community-based AIDS service organization; **Children's Diagnostic and Treatment Center**, which serves underinsured and uninsured disabled and chronically ill persons; and the federally qualified health centers, **Borinquen Health Care Center, Community Health of South Florida** and **Jessie Trice Community Health Center**. For more information please visit dentaquestinstitute.org.

About DentaQuest

DentaQuest, one of the nation's largest dental benefits providers in the nation, serving more than 14 million members through both commercial and government dental programs, is supporting Miami-Dade's school-based *Healthy Smiles in Our Schools* program with administration of high quality dental benefits.

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