

## Fifty-four dental students reach out to more than 1,400 community members during the past school year

**S**tudents of the Rice Regional Dental Clinic experienced a busy school year that ended in June 2009. Not only were they students, but on occasion the students were teachers as well. Fifty-four dental students reached out to more than 1,400 community members through 42 oral health presentations at area schools, camps, and community centers during the past nine months.

Oral healthcare presentations are part of the training experience provided by the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry which oversees student internships at the Rice Regional Dental Clinic.

The presentations instill a value of community service; provide oral healthcare education to attendees; provide information about dental careers to middle and high school students; provide positive role modeling to youth; and represent Rice Regional Dental Clinic, Rice Memorial Hospital, and the School of Dentistry to the region.

Southern Minnesota Area Health Education Center (AHEC) assembled interactive teaching kits used by the students. AHEC also scheduled presentations and prepared students for each event. Students made

presentations in Willmar, New London-Spicer, Montevideo, Litchfield, Bird Island, and other towns throughout the region. During presentations, students shared information about oral healthcare, food and

beverage choices for healthy teeth, why dentist visits are beneficial, and, careers in the dental field. All attendees received a complimentary, age-appropriate toothbrush. Funding for toothbrushes was provided by grants from United Way and Kandiyohi Power Trust.

“The dental students returned from classroom presentations with heartwarming stories,” said Kathy Huntley, AHEC Director, “as

many children reported that they hadn’t had a new toothbrush in a long time. Some children said that it was the first toothbrush they’ve ever received.”

Response to the presentations has been positive. “Through post-presentation evaluations, we have clearly received the message that interactive, hands-on learning engages the listeners,” said Huntley. “Comments from evaluators have told us that K-12 students enjoyed the presentations and found them to be interesting. The community sincerely appreciates the outreach efforts our dental students have made.”



*Tim Roth, Joseph Trujillo, Ruth Atterberg, and Katie Daniels represent the 54 dental students who have made oral healthcare presentations to the community.*