ADA Foundation funds initiatives to help prevent early childhood tooth decay

Infants and children from 10 U.S. communities will benefit from grants awarded this year by the ADA Foundation’s Samuel Harris Fund to help prevent early childhood caries (ECC), which affects more than 25 percent of U.S. infants and children aged 1 to 6 years.

Sometimes referred to as “baby bottle” tooth decay, early childhood caries is a rampant form of acute decay made worse in infants and toddlers by prolonged contact with almost any liquid other than water. This can happen by putting an infant to bed with a bottle of formula, milk, juice or any beverage containing sugar, or allowing them to suck on a bottle or breastfeeding for longer than a single mealtime, either when awake or asleep.

Left untreated, this decay can cause pain and impact a child’s ability to chew and speak properly.

This year’s Harris Fund winners designed programs that focus on preventing ECC, including an educational component for pregnant and parenting mothers and caregivers.

The following organizations received grants, sharing $50,000:
- Colorado Area Health Education Center of Aurora, Colo.
- La Clinica de La Raza of Oakland, Calif.
- Primary Health Care of Urbandale, Iowa.
- St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation of Billings, Mont.
- Youth & Family Services of Rapid City, S.D.
- Children’s Dental Services of Minneapolis.

Dental museum devotes day to animal teeth

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

The National Museum of Dentistry, located in Baltimore, plans to hold a special event — called “Jaws and Paws” — dedicated to teaching members of the general public about animal teeth.

The family festival will be held Saturday, June 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The purpose of the event, according to museum officials, is to better educate people about their own teeth.

“The variety of teeth in the animal kingdom shows us how different animals use their teeth for different jobs,” said National Museum of Dentistry Executive Director Jonathan Landers. “It also teaches us how important it is to preserve our own teeth.”

According to the museum, just as human teeth adapted through time to tear off a chunk of food and chew it, the teeth of elephants, beavers, snakes and lions evolved to perform specialized tasks.

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(Dental museum photo by Sonyae, Dreamstime.com)