

Partner Profiles



Lisa Park Laflin, Executive Director

Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) and its funded Partners. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

Community Dental keeps children smiling

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area allocates funds to Community Dental so they are able to provide dental services to those who otherwise could not afford them. Community Dental's mission is to provide affordable, accessible, quality, dental health services to children and adults. It is a not-for-profit dental health organization established in Portland, Maine in 1918. It provides a dental home for treatment, disease prevention, education services and emergency care for people of all ages residing in southern, western and central Maine. The Dental Health Centers are located in Rumford, Lewiston, Farmington, Portland and Biddeford. A full range of general dentistry is provided by licensed dentists and hygienists. The centers accept all major dental insurance carriers and have income based sliding fees for lower income households and people with no dental insurance.

Throughout the month of February, Community Dental in Farmington and Rumford recognized Children's Dental Health month by providing dental health education in local Head Start and elementary school classrooms. Dr. Anne Meeuwsen, currently working in the Rumford office, has a few great reminders for keeping your children's smiles beautiful and healthy.

Q: What is the most popular time to go to the dentist? A: 2:30 (tooth-hurty). A familiar joke to many is also an unpleasant reality for many children. Dental decay is one of the most common diseases in children. While dental cavities are on the rise for children age 2-5 years old, there are actually many means of preventing cavities from ever developing. Here are several tips to keep your child's mouth healthy and pain-free.

- A child should start visiting the dentist at age one. This is a shift in perspective from the former recommendation of a first visit at age three.
- Sealants, which are a protective plastic coating applied to permanent and primary (or "baby") teeth that are at risk for developing cavities, should be applied. Sealants can be received at the dental office as well as through school-based programs.
- Fluoride, which is a natural mineral that strengthens the outer surface of the tooth, should be used. It is available in many forms. Toothpaste with the ADA seal is fluoridated and not only cleans teeth but provides beneficial fluoride. Several mouth rinses on the market contain fluoride as well.

Fluoride can even be prescribed for young children who do not get enough through their water source. Fluoride is also administered at the dental office. Fluoride not only strengthens teeth to prevent cavities, it can actually reverse small cavities so that they do not have to be filled by the dentist.

- Children should eat a good, balanced diet. Even with diligent brushing and flossing, a poor diet can quickly cause a good mouth to deteriorate with cavities. Each time a fermentable carbohydrate (think starch or sugar), is put into the mouth, it lowers the pH of the mouth-- making it vulnerable to cavities. It takes about 30 minutes for the mouth to recover so that the teeth are no longer under attack. What this means is that if a child is snacking or sipping frequently throughout the day, cavities are likely to result. Major culprits are sodas (even diet soda), juice, other sweetened beverages such as sports drinks, candies, and crackers.

Preventative dentistry is the route to take to keep your child cavity free. Advanced dental cavities can cause pain, infection, swelling, and can even lead to hospitalization. Keep your child healthy and smiling by obtaining preventative dentistry and visiting your dentist regularly.

Both Western Maine offices are currently accepting new patients. You can contact the Farmington office at 779-2659 or the Rumford office at 369-3600.