



# Kerry's Kids

## Children in Poverty and Bringing Dental Care to our Community

### Message from Medical Director Christine Ma, MD

In September, a report released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation explained that the rate of U.S. children under age 18 living in poverty was at the highest level in over a decade. Over 15 million children, or 22% of the children in this country, are living in poverty. The rate of poverty in California mirrors the national rate of 22%. The Federal Poverty Level this year is defined as a household income less than \$22,350 for a family of four.

We have continued to see increasing numbers of children affected by the poor economy, with parents losing their job and ultimately their housing. There are more families experiencing homelessness for the first time. Once in this situation, it can be very difficult to climb out of it, and families can be overwhelmed with all the things they need to take care of - finding a place to live, feeding their family, looking for a job, and more. Unfortunately, as a result of all their competing priorities, accessing timely health care can be a challenge.

Eleven percent of children in California are without health insurance each year, and 1 out of 3 children have only publicly-funded insurance, such as Medicaid. For California children on Medicaid, only one-third of these children see a dentist during the year. A 2006 report from the Alameda County Public Health Department found that nearly half of kindergarteners and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in low-income schools had untreated tooth decay. This is our community, where Kerry's Kids see children and the funding for

publicly funded dental care continues to be at risk with the state of the California budget.

Kerry's Kids has been able to continue providing free medical care to children staying in shelters and in low-income communities, through the generous donations of our supporters such as you. During the clinics with our volunteer doctors and nurses, we continued to see a great gap in services in the area of dental care. Therefore, we were so grateful earlier this year to receive a generous donation from the Webb Family Foundation to start an oral health program. We now have free dental clinics alongside our medical clinics where the children can see a dentist. Families have been flooding the clinics, thrilled to have the chance for their children to see a dentist. It was best described by a mom at one of the homeless shelters who said,

**"This is the best thing that has ever happened to us, dental-wise."**

We look forward to continuing both our clinics with the dentist and the doctors in 2012. Thank you for all of your generous support. Without this support, none of our work would be possible. We wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season.

Christine Ma, M.D.  
Medical Director

## Greetings from Kerry's Kids Board President

This has been an amazingly productive and exciting year. Thanks to the diligence of our Medical Director, Dr. Christine Ma, we have been fortunate to have been given a grant from the Webb Family Foundation enabling Kerry's Kids to start a dental program for the families we serve.

We have hired a wonderful dentist, Sara Soleimani; we are so lucky to have her. Sara provides dental screenings and dental education at each of our five clinic sites. We also have a process that allows us to refer children that need additional dental work to La Clinica Dental Clinic regardless of insurance status.

Access to dental care is even more limited than medical care for people living in poverty. I am so proud and excited that we have added

these services to what Kerry's Kids can offer. Thank you so much, Webb Family Foundation!

As always we continue to offer acute medical care and immunizations to children at five sites around the East Bay. Our wonderful medical volunteers and staff continue to offer their time and expertise each week, allowing us to provide care to children with limited access to health care.

The Board and I want to thank all our donors. It is your generous gifts that allow Kerry's Kids to continue and grow.

Respectfully yours,

Diane Halberg, M.D.  
President of the Board, Kerry's Kids

## Dental Care for Kerry's Kids

It has been a privilege to work with Kerry's Kids over the past several months. I have truly been thrilled to be part of such a wonderful program that provides dental care to homeless children. The dental program with Kerry's Kids began this summer and has already reached and helped hundreds of children.

Oral health is often neglected, especially among those who do not have access to health care. In the pediatric population, poor oral health can be a source of considerable pain, discomfort, and the number one reason for school absenteeism. During the last several months, we have seen dozens of children with severe dental decay and dental abscesses.

Many children have never been to the dentist and do not know how to brush or floss properly.

During a dental visit with Kerry's Kids, children receive an oral hygiene kit that includes a toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss. We discuss hygiene instruction with the children, using a puppet that the children love. The children receive a visual exam, and the findings are discussed with both the parent and child. Varnish is applied to help prevent cavities and strengthen teeth. For those patients who do not have a dentist, an appointment is made at the dental clinic at Children's Hospital.

There is an incredible need for dental care among the pediatric population in Oakland. Our hope is that we will be able to fill some of this need, and more importantly, help promote oral health to keep our patients teeth as healthy as possible.



Dr. Soleimani with a young patient

Sara Soleimani, DDS



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*A special thank you to  
**Katherine Castillo & Vicky Khoury**, our  
 two coordinators, for their continued  
 dedication & diligence!*

### **Our Invaluable Volunteers**

*Kerry's Kids couldn't fulfill its mission without many volunteers. Thanks to the following people who have generously donated their time.*

Lela Bachrach, MD	Karen Kruger, MD
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**Also, special thanks to EVERYONE who donated individually to Kerry's Kids.**

### **Kerry's Kids relies on donations from corporations and individuals**

Please consider a donation using the enclosed envelope. Donations can also be made online through [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).

More information about online donations can be found at [www.kerryskids.org](http://www.kerryskids.org).

We appreciate in-kind donations of new or like-new items for the children & families that we serve.

We are a 501(c)3 organization, so your contributions are fully tax-deductible.



## Our Mission Statement

"Kerry's Kids provides free health care and education to underserved children in their neighborhoods and seeks to facilitate that each child ultimately receives care in a permanent medical home."

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### **A Mom Speaks Up in Thanks**

*"As a mother of two with no dental insurance for my kids at the moment, this program came to my rescue. I just filled out the form with my basic information and waited our turn to see the dentist. She examined my kids' teeth and taught them how to brush their teeth properly. Then, they referred us to the dental clinic at Children's Hospital. There they took x-rays and cleaned their teeth. It was a great experience for us.*

*Thank you, Kerry's Kids!!!"*

