



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Liz Shawen
PR Counsel
850.224.0174
lizs@moorecommgroup.com

FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION PROVIDES MORE THAN \$1.7 MILLION IN DENTAL CARE AT NO COST TO MORE THAN 1,900 FLORIDIANS

Fourth Florida Mission of Mercy Event in Fort Myers Offers Relief from Pain and Infection and Restores Smiles

FORT MYERS, FL – The Florida Dental Association Foundation (FDA Foundation) hosted its fourth *Florida Mission of Mercy (FLA-MOM)* event on March 9-10 at Lee County Civic Center, which provided more than 1,900 Floridians with donated dental care valued at more than \$1.7 million.

“We are honored to have the opportunity to serve Floridians who may have otherwise had to seek temporary care at hospital emergency departments,” said Bob Payne, DDS, president of the FDA Foundation. “The *Florida Mission of Mercy* brings together more than 1,500 dentists, dental professionals and other volunteers from across the state to help relieve pain and restore smiles, while promoting oral health awareness and education.”

The *FLA-MOM* is a two-day dental event sponsored by the FDA Foundation to provide treatment to patients, who for many reasons, lack access to dental care. The first-come, first-served event is held in a different location each year. Previous *FLA-MOM* events held in Tampa in 2014, Jacksonville in 2016 and Pensacola in 2017 provided a combined 6,200 patients with donated dental care valued at more than \$5.9 million.

While the *FLA-MOM* provides much-needed relief to thousands, the high volume of patients participating in this program also highlights the critical need to promote oral health education, prevention and access to routine dental services in Florida. Oral health is critical to overall health and success, and the challenges of accessing routine dental care result in repeated visits to the emergency room for preventable dental problems, missed days of school due to toothaches, and lower GPAs and graduation rates.

“There is a significant need to support public health dentistry in Florida and promote dental care for underserved communities,” added Dr. Payne. “Many Florida Dental Association members provide free dental treatments and education in their communities year-round through *Project: Dentists Care* donated dental services and other volunteer programs.”

To help improve oral health for all Floridians, the Florida Dental Association (FDA) developed *Florida’s Action for Dental Health*, a comprehensive effort to address obstacles to dental care in Florida. This initiative includes efforts to expand public health dentistry, promote attainable care for the uninsured and underserved, and support and expand volunteer safety net programs like the *FLA-MOM* and *Project: Dentists Care*.

“Everyone should have the opportunity to have good oral health,” said Michael Eggnatz, DDS, president of the FDA. “We need to collaborate and work for solutions to leverage Florida’s robust dental workforce to provide oral health education, prevention and comprehensive care to Florida’s underserved and rural communities.”

The FDA Foundation and *Florida Mission of Mercy* Committee also have spearheaded a first-of-its-kind study to evaluate the impact of a *FLA-MOM* event on local communities and emergency departments. This Impact Study aims to gain a better understanding of the patients who seek dental care at *FLA-MOM* events, their access to dental care outside of this event, their use of hospital emergency departments for dental problems, and the effect of this event on emergency department utilization.

For more information on the *Florida Mission of Mercy*, please visit www.FLAMOM.org.

For information on statewide and local *Project: Dentists Care* programs and clinics, please visit www.fdacares.org.

###

About the Florida Dental Association Foundation

The Florida Dental Association Foundation (FDA Foundation) is the charitable arm of the Florida Dental Association (FDA), a statewide association representing Florida-licensed dentists. The mission of the FDA Foundation is to promote dental health for all Floridians. To learn more, visit www.floridadental.org/foundation.