



MEDIA RELEASE

Early Years Service Awarded For Improving Children's Oral Health

2 May 2018

Staff, families and children Merbein Kindergarten are all smiles after receiving their Smiles 4 Miles award. They are the first kindergarten in our region to achieve the Smiles 4 Miles award by implementing healthy eating and oral health policies, engaging with families about the importance of oral health, and educating children through a variety of fun learning experiences based on the Smiles 4 Miles key messages – Drink well, Eat well and Clean well.

Smiles 4 Miles is an initiative of Dental Health Services Victoria and is implemented locally by Sunraysia Community Health Service (SCHS) to improve the oral health of children and their families.

“Good habits are formed early in life. By teaching our children the importance of brushing twice daily, eating a wide variety of healthy foods and drinking water instead of soft drinks, we can encourage them to make smarter choices, as they get older. Promoting good oral health behaviours early in life, can help decrease the likelihood of oral health diseases later in life, such as gum disease and dental decay.” Toulia Le Gassick, Oral Health Educator at SCHS.

Smiles 4 Miles encourages good oral health habits with preschool aged children and their families. We know that good oral health is essential to your overall health and wellbeing, and we also know that good habits are learned early in life” said Linda Henderson, Manager of Preventative Health at SCHS.

Tooth decay is the most common cause of potentially preventable hospitalisations in Victorian's aged 0-19 years. In the Mildura region the hospital admission rates for dental conditions in children aged 0-4 years in Mildura is 10.7 children per 1000, which is higher than the state average of 4.8 children.

This year 16 Kindergartens in the region are participating in the Smiles 4 Miles program and will work with the SCHS Dental Team and HTM team to promote drinking tap water, eating a wide variety of ‘everyday’ foods and brushing twice a day. Kindergarten visits to SCHS will begin in May for oral health screenings and run throughout the year.

“This is a great opportunity to work in partnership with our local community, neighbouring health services and early childhood services to improve the oral health of children and their families” said Kim Williams, Director at Merbein Kindergarten.

Children form habits, whether good or bad, at a young age, so teaching them good oral health behaviours now will help them to keep their teeth healthy for life. Remember the three steps to healthy teeth and gums!

1. Drink well- Drink tap water or plain milk and avoid sugary drinks like cordials, juices and soft drinks



2. Eat well- Eat a variety of nutritious foods each day and limit sugary foods, particularly between meals
3. Clean well- Brush teeth twice daily, adults should help children until at least the age of 8.

END

Media enquiries to:

Photo Opportunity 9am, Wednesday 2 May At SCHS, 137 Thirteenth Street, Mildura
Toula Legassick
Oral Health Educator
Phone: (03) 5022 5444