



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Delta Dental of Kentucky Funds the OAK Project With \$200,000 Grant**

*Delta Dental of Kentucky and the Eastern Regional Oral Health Coalition to provide oral health solutions to children in eastern Kentucky*

**LOUISVILLE, Ky.** (April 16, 2018) – A grant from Delta Dental of Kentucky will help improve oral health among children throughout Kentucky’s Appalachian region. Delta Dental of Kentucky, through a partnership with Kentucky Youth Advocates, developed the Eastern Regional Oral Health Coalition. The region’s initiative, the OAK Project, will help improve oral health outcomes in children ages 6-9, by refining access to urgent dental care, treating existing tooth decay, and increasing the baseline of dental sealants across the region through the development of data and training infrastructures.

The OAK Project, which stands for “Oral Health of Appalachian Kentucky”, is the result of state research findings published in the *Making Smiles Happen<sup>®</sup>: 2016 Oral Health Study of Kentucky’s Youth*. Based on these findings, Delta Dental of Kentucky expanded its commitment to oral health across the state and provided \$1 million to launch five regional networks to develop oral health solutions across the state. Delta Dental of Kentucky partnered with Kentucky Youth Advocates to develop the five regional networks.

In research findings, it was determined that eastern Kentucky had the highest percentage of children with untreated cavities in the state. The OAK Project was created to help improve the oral health of children who live in the 49 counties that make up the Appalachian region. The program will accomplish its goals through promoting oral

health literacy, increasing dental sealants in children, engaging with community partners, and increasing oral health components in public schools.

“Delta Dental of Kentucky is thrilled to announce the creation of the OAK Project, a program that will impact the dental health of so many kids throughout eastern Kentucky,” Delta Dental of Kentucky CEO Jude Thompson said. “We believe that the implementation of these regional programs will drive the action necessary to improve the oral health of Kentucky’s children. We are proud to help fund these wonderful programs, which will have a lasting impact on children statewide.”

In eastern Kentucky, the OAK Project will promote continuous data collection, and implement community projects and outreach programs to educate the region on predominant oral health concerns and solutions.

“Thanks to the vision and support of Delta Dental of Kentucky, we’re bringing innovative and creative health solutions to patients in eastern Kentucky,” Dr. Nikki Stone, regional leader and facilitator of the OAK Project said. “We have an obligation to care for the needs of Kentucky’s children, and we’re looking forward to the positive outcomes this program will provide.”

Stone is the Dental Director for the UK North Fork Valley Community Health Center in Hazard, Kentucky. Additionally, she holds the role of Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry. Stone has practiced dentistry for 19 years with expertise in children’s dentistry and a focus on advocating for underserved children in the community.

The OAK Project is one of four Kentucky programs developed through the partnership between Delta Dental of Kentucky and the Kentucky Youth Advocates.

The full scope of work for each region’s project, along with video, is now available at [www.kentuckyoralhealth.com/](http://www.kentuckyoralhealth.com/).

### **About Delta Dental of Kentucky and Making Smiles Happen®**

Delta Dental of Kentucky is a not-for-profit company that is committed to bright smiles and healthy lifestyles for its 700,000 enrollees and the communities we serve. Delta Dental of Kentucky is part of a family of companies that collectively are among the largest, most experienced dental plan administrators in the nation. Our network of providers gives our customers access to high-quality, affordable dental care.

Making Smiles Happen® is Delta Dental of Kentucky’s promise to serve our communities and residents one smile at a time. Aimed with the task of promoting oral health to the citizens of Kentucky, this initiative supports many non-profit partners. Giving back is a core component of our culture at Delta Dental, and Making Smiles Happen enables this support to be given to organizations that champion a better quality of life for citizens throughout our Commonwealth.

### **About Kentucky Youth Advocates:**

Kentucky Youth Advocates believes all children deserve to have a safe and loving family, have access to quality education and health care, and have opportunities to help them thrive. As THE independent voice for Kentucky's children, we work to ensure policymakers create investments and policies that are good for children.

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