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Small to Tall Pediatric Dentistry Organizes Free Dental Health Screenings at the Hands On Children's Museum

by ThurstonTalk Editor

By Kate Scriven

In February, the [American Dental Association](#) (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month and here in Thurston County the month is highlighted by activities throughout the community, raising awareness of the importance of good dental health. Children's dental health is an area of importance as teaching our littlest brushers good hygiene creates life-long healthy habits.

Olympia's [Small to Tall Pediatric Dentistry](#) is excited to organize free dental health screenings, throughout February, at the [Hands On Children's Museum](#). The screenings are a project of the Thurston-Mason Counties Dental Society and have been sponsored by Small to Tall for the past five years. "The opportunity to partner with the Hands On Children's Museum means a great deal to us. It enables us to reach more children and families and educate them on the need for early and consistent dental care. Early interventions are key to preventing bigger problems later in life," shares Dr. Scott Rowley, one of the organizing dentists from Small to Tall.

The screenings will be held each Saturday in February from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Participants will receive free admission to the museum for the day as well, allowing full access to the interactive exhibits at the state's most visited children's museum.



Dentists from the Thurston-Mason Counties Dental Society will be conducting free dental screenings at the Hands On Children's Museum on Saturdays throughout February.

In addition to the Saturday screenings, dentists will be on hand on the museum's "Free Friday Night" from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on February 7. Come explore the museum, including specially designed dental exhibits, and have your child screened by the local volunteer dentists. Screenings will be open from 5-8 p.m.

Genevieve Chan, HOCM's Director of Communications shares, "The Museum is excited to team up with regional dental practices to offer this important service to families. It's great that we can help educate families, and especially children, about the importance of dental hygiene. In addition to the screenings, we have an interactive dental office exhibit where kids can put on a lab coat and see real x-rays of teeth, and cute crafts like Clothespin Tooth Fairies and Smiles Wide Tooth Charts that making learning about dental health and taking care of your teeth fun."



Art projects, related to dental health, will be taking place inside the Hands On Children's Museum.

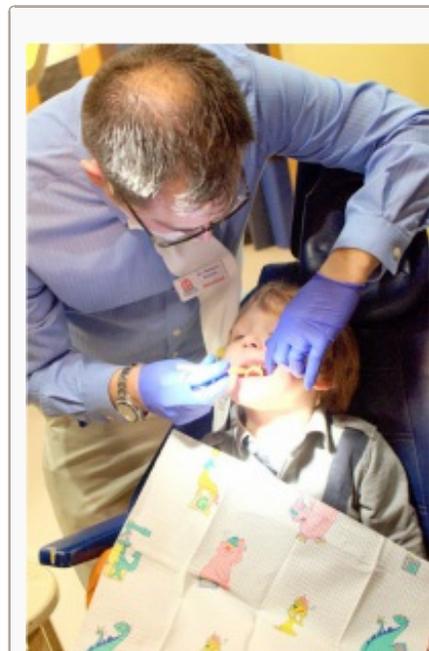
Expect to have your child seated in a typical dental chair, generously donated by [Burkhart Dental Supply](#), while they are examined by one of the local dentist volunteers. After an in-depth look, the dentists will offer suggestions and recommendations to parents and care-givers for further assessment or treatment.

This year the dentists are joined by Pixie Needham on Friday, February 7. Needham is a local hygienist working with the local [Access to Baby and Childhood Dentistry](#) (ABCD), a program that assists Medicaid children. She will connect families with contact information and proper resources needed to find their child a dental home. Being able to "close the loop" for families, providing direct access that is covered through Medicaid, is a crucial and needed last step to helping children on the road to lasting dental care.

In addition to valuable information for parents, kids will leave with a goodie bag including a new toothbrush, toothpaste and a fun coloring book focused on good brushing and flossing habits at home.

Dr. Benjamin Ruder from Small to Tall Pediatric Dentistry shares, "Our relationship with the Hands On Children's Museum and organizing the free dental screenings over the years has been mutually beneficial. It allows the museum to highlight oral health and dental education, an aspect of children's education that may not normally get much attention. Plus it provides Small to Tall, and other dentists in the community, with a venue to reach out to kids and families. It has been a great way to provide outreach to our local community."

In 2012, local dentists screened over 150 children, operating from the old HOCM location. In 2013, the dentists screened over 1000 children. The larger space, excitement of visiting the new museum, and the increasing need are bringing people out in greater numbers. The group expects numbers to increase again this year.



Dr. Rob Perlot examines a child during a free dental screening at the Hands On Children's Museum. The dental screenings are organized by Dr. Scott Rowley and Dr. Ben Ruder of Small to Tall Pediatric Dentistry.

Dr. Ruder shares that what he enjoys most about the screenings is the chance to engage with the greater community. “We are often isolated in our own practices and the HOCM free dental screenings provide a great opportunity to work with my dental colleagues for a common cause. The camaraderie and enjoyment shared amongst the dentists that participate speaks highly of the community-minded nature of the dentists in the Thurston-Mason County Dental Society.”

Dr. Rowley agrees. “We are excited to help our community and participate in this annual event. Small to Tall takes advantage of the focus on children’s dental health in February to increase our outreach into local schools and preschools, sharing with kids about the best way to care for their teeth. We use humor, skits, props – really anything we can – to help the kids feel ownership of the idea that caring for their teeth is an important job.”

For more information and resources for National Children’s Dental Health Month, visit the [ADA](#) website or [Small To Tall Pediatric Dentistry](#).

Small to Tall and the Hands On Children’s Museum thank this year’s dental volunteers – Rosaleen Shavron, Robert Perlot, Spenser Cammack, Steven Alexander, Scott Rowley, Ben Ruder, Walter Haley, Charles Fankhauser, Duke Watson, Lori Noga, Danny Davidson, Maureen Craig, and Karl Hoffman.

[Hands On Children’s Museum](#)

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Exhibits inside the Hands On Children’s Museum support oral hygiene education.