



Dexter dentist Brent Kolb (left), Saline dentist Jennifer McFinton, holding her daughter Lucy, and Ann Arbor dentist Alberto Herrero are involved in Brighter Smiles for Brighter Futures.

Photo by Chris Wright

Dentists exchange services for donation to diabetes foundation

By Chris Wright
Special Writer

As a dentist, Dr. Jennifer McFinton was always vigilant about not letting her daughter, Lucy, eat too much sugar.

Now, for the Saline dentist, the fear of dental cavities is nothing compared to daily life-or-death concerns of insulin shots for her daughter, who was diagnosed with type-1 diabetes earlier this year.

Lucy, now 4 1/2, has to have her blood sugar levels tested up to 10 times a day and endure insulin shots for her entire life. That is, unless a cure is found.

To that end, McFinton is leading a number of other southeast Michigan dentists in a charitable program called "Brighter Smiles for Brighter Futures." The program involves the dentists giving home bleaching kits to patients in exchange for a \$249 donation to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. An additional \$30 fee for materials is also being charged.

McFinton said dentists usually charge between \$400 and \$500 for the service. The dentists build a custom-fit tray for patients' mouths, and then send the tray and the bleaching gel

home with the patient.

Participants do not have to be patients at her office, McFinton said, and gift certificates for the service are available. The program ends Dec. 20.

McFinton said she first got the idea for the program after reading in a dental trade magazine about an Atlanta dentist who organized the same sort of effort for a cancer center in 2001. That program yielded more than \$369,000 in donations.

"Hopefully, once we get the word out, more doctors will get involved," she said.

Participating dentists are all friends of McFinton, many of whom attended dental school at the University of Michigan with her. One of those friends, Dr. Brent Kolb, whose practice is Dexter Family Dentistry in Dexter, said he was more than happy to join her.

"It's a win-win," Kolb said. "Patients get whiter teeth, dentists feel good about themselves helping and the money goes to a good cause."

Drs. J. Michael Dibble and Tereze Steinhoff of Woodland Family Dentistry are also participating, as well as Saline dentists Drs. Carola Gerigk, Lisa Powell and Gytis Udrys.

In Chelsea, Drs. Todd Napieralski and Brian Wisniewski are involved. Dentists Paul Riker, with offices in

Allen Park and Trenton, Alberto Herrero in Ann Arbor and Monica Vaisman in Dundee are also participating.

Currently, there is no cure for juvenile diabetes. Insulin is still the most common way to control the disease. There have been some treatment advances, however.

Lucy was diagnosed with the disease in January after her mother and her father, Andy McFinton, took their only child to the emergency room with what they thought may have been the flu.

"It was a total shock to us," McFinton said about finding out her daughter had diabetes.

Diabetes can lead to limb amputation, blindness, and kidney and nervous system disorders. When blood sugar levels are high, children are often emotional and upset. When they are low, tiredness sets in.

It's especially hard for parents with children young like Lucy to know whether insulin is necessary without testing.

"It's hard to tell if she's just being a typical kid," McFinton said.

Woodland Family Dentistry is located at 510 N. Ann Arbor St. in Saline. The phone number is 429-4111.

Chris Wright is a freelance writer. He can be reached at liberty4589@com.

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Future

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