



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:** Liz Shawen Underwood  
PR Counsel  
850.224.0174  
[lizu@moorecommgroup.com](mailto:lizu@moorecommgroup.com)

### **FLORIDA DENTAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION PROVIDES APPROX. \$2.3 MILLION IN DENTAL CARE AT NO COST TO MORE THAN 1,850 FLORIDIANS**

*Ninth Florida Mission of Mercy Event in Lakeland Provides Relief from Pain and Restores Smiles*

**TALLAHASSEE, FL** – The Florida Dental Association Foundation (FDA Foundation) hosted its ninth *Florida Mission of Mercy* event on May 31-June 1 at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland, which provided donated dental care valued at approximately \$2.3 million to more than 1,850 Floridians.

“This care is going to change everything,” said Mason, a patient at the 2024 *Florida Mission of Mercy*. “I have an eight-year-old son, and as his coach on his team, I’m going to feel more confident. I’m always trying to hide my teeth. It’s going to be great to be able to smile and have a big grin on my face.”

*Florida Mission of Mercy* is a two-day dental clinic sponsored by the FDA Foundation to provide treatment to patients, who for many reasons, lack access to dental care. Previous *Florida Mission of Mercy* events held in Tampa, Jacksonville, Pensacola, Fort Myers, Orlando, Tallahassee, and West Palm Beach provided nearly 14,000 patients with donated dental care valued at more than \$14.6 million.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to provide education, critical dental treatment and preventive care to more than 1,800 community members,” said Dr. Paul Palo, co-chair of the 2024 *Florida Mission of Mercy*.

“*Florida Mission of Mercy* brings together hundreds of dentists, dental professionals, medical professionals, and other volunteers from across the state to help relieve pain and restore smiles while promoting oral health awareness and education,” said Dr. Chris Bulnes, co-chair of the 2024 *Florida Mission of Mercy*. “We make a significant impact not only on patients but also our communities by providing treatment to those who might otherwise seek temporary care in the emergency room.”

While *Florida Mission of Mercy* provides much-needed relief to thousands, the volume of patients participating in this program also highlights the significant 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 work and school due to toothaches, and lower GPAs and graduation rates.

“There is a significant need for public health dentistry in Florida and solutions to promote dental care in our underserved communities,” said Dr. Rick Stevenson, president of the FDA Foundation. “In addition to our annual

*Florida Mission of Mercy* clinic, many Florida Dental Association (FDA) member dentists provide free dental treatments and oral health education in their communities year-round through *Project: Dentists Care*, Florida Donated Dental Services, and other volunteer programs.”

To help improve oral health for all Floridians, the 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 *Florida Mission of Mercy*. A key effort championed by the FDA is funding for Florida’s dental student loan repayment program, which will help participating dentists practice as Medicaid providers in rural and underserved areas.

“Everyone should have the opportunity to have good oral health,” said Dr. Beatriz Terry, president of the FDA. “Dental issues have far-reaching impacts on an individual’s ability to eat, speak, sleep, work and learn. That’s why the FDA champions solutions and leads efforts like *Florida Mission of Mercy* to increase oral health education and preventive care and help the more than 14,000 dentists in our state serve our rural and underserved communities.”

For more information, please visit [www.FLAMOM.org](http://www.FLAMOM.org)

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**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](http://www.floridadental.org/foundation).*