



# Spotlight on Oral Health

## Dental Health Promotion Working Group of Saskatchewan Newsletter

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### Gruen Von Behrens' powerful Anti-Tobacco message to Grade nine students around Saskatchewan

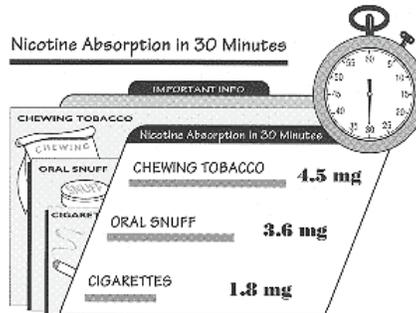
Traveling from his home in rural Illinois, Gruen Von Behrens spent a week in late October touring schools throughout Saskatchewan with an inspiring and powerful message for students fortunate enough to hear his story. Speaking to audiences of grade nine students, a notable quiet came over the room in city after city as Gruen introduced himself with a Midwest accent and a slight slur to his speech, the result of over 30 life saving surgeries to his jaw and face. Diagnosed with oral cancer at the age of 17, Gruen began using spit tobacco at the age of 13. What began as a white spot on his tongue in time became Oral Cancer. Now at 31, Gruen encourages students throughout his tour to think for themselves and to consider his disfigured face before they decide to use any tobacco product.



Gruen's tour is the result of a partnership between the Canadian Cancer Society and various Saskatchewan Dental Health Professionals, including Saskatchewan Dental Health Educators. His visit comes at a time when Saskatchewan's 24% smoking rate is one of the highest in Canada, compared to the national average of 18%. An equally alarming trend was noted in a 2005 Spit Tobacco Survey conducted by the Dental Health Educators Group of Saskatchewan with the survey showing that 15% of grade 9 students throughout the province identified themselves as users of "chew" or smokeless/spit tobacco.

Photo L-R: **Dr. Lawrence Reimer** DDS Swift Current, Gruen Von Behrens, Loretta Singh Dental Health Educator Cypress Health Region, Khami Chokani Medical Health Officer Cypress Health Region Photo courtesy of Loretta Singh—Cypress Health Region

### Smokeless Tobacco: not a healthy alternative



Now that it's been scientifically determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health, the tobacco industry has been promoting the use of smokeless tobacco. It is a myth that smokeless tobacco is a safe alternative to cigarettes, when actually it's just as or more dangerous than smoking. Many cigarette users have switched to smokeless tobacco over the past several years because of the misconception that where there's no smoke, there's no danger. Smokeless tobacco is more popular now than it has been in the last 50 years, with adolescent males as the fastest growing group of users.

For more information on the harmful effects of tobacco, please visit:  
[www.kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/tobacco/](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/tobacco/)

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A bouquet of flowers goes to Saskatoon Health Region DHE Myrna Ruthven as she retires this Dec 2008 after a successful and rewarding 30 year career. See pg 4 to read more on the legacy of healthy smiles she leaves behind.





### Halloween Tips

#### Lots of Loot?

Sit down and set some limits before the treats get home... Maybe they could trade you some of their candy for something they have had their eye on lately.

- > The best time to eat "treats" is at the end of a meal.
- > No treats should be allowed in bed or carried around in pockets for easy access all day long.
- > Can't brush after treats? Try:
  - chewing sugar-free gum
  - rinsing with water
  - eating a crunchy food like an apple, celery or carrot sticks

#### REMEMBER!

This does not replace brushing, ,

Make sure healthy snacks such as cheese, milk or lightly buttered popcorn are available



## Provincial Dental Screening

Dental Health Educators throughout Saskatchewan will be providing dental screenings to all Grade 1 and 7 students during the 2008-2009 school year. The dental screening is a study that monitors the oral health of children and assists in future program planning of dental health services. The dental screening program was implemented in 1993-94 to assess the dental health status of children throughout the province. The provincial mandate is to re-evaluate the dental screening program every five years.

The brief dental screening is done by a licensed dental therapist using a small flashlight, tongue depressor and/or sterilized mouth mirror. A screening result letter is sent home with each child after the screening. The dental screening identifies children with dental needs and alerts parents to dental concerns.

### Trick or Treat – Find Something Good to Eat

Halloween is the night of ghosts and goblins, trick-or-treat and sugary foods. For children, the collection of sticky, sweet treats is a dream come true. However, for parents who are concerned about what their child eats, Halloween may be scary indeed. Here are a few suggestions to help you deal with Halloween's tricky treats.

Encourage your child to have sweet treats after eating a balanced meal containing foods from *Canada's Food Guide*. Sugary treats contain few of the many nutrients needed by growing children. If children eat too many treats, they may have little room left for more nutritious foods. Also, sugar plays a large part in tooth decay. Eating sweets continuously throughout the day allows sugar to remain in the mouth longer. Sweet treats are best eaten at mealtime. Encourage your child to brush and floss after eating Halloween candy. Be sure to supervise atleast one of your child's daily brushing. A proper brushing should take 2-3 minutes.

Dare to be different! Rather than filling trick-or-treat bags with sugary treats, encourage your friends and neighbours to join you in offering healthier choices such as cheese and crackers, sugarless gum, plain popcorn or non food items such as Halloween stickers, pens, erasers, pencils or crayons

Halloween tradition isn't only about eating candy. Costumes, pumpkin carving and Halloween parties make this a fun celebration. By offering healthy choices this Halloween, you can encourage children to have good eating habits that last a lifetime. Have a fun, safe and healthy Halloween!



# A Legacy of Smiles featuring: Myrna Ruthven



With a career spanning over 30 years, Humboldt based Dental Health Educator Myrna Ruthven will be retiring at the end of December. She first began her varied career as one of the first graduates of the SIAST Dental Therapy program in 1975. Initially based in Watrous, she was part of the successful school based dental plan. In that early role, she had the unique opportunity to work

in a clinical setting and create dental awareness in her young patients. With the demise of the school dental program in the 1980's she began her work as a Dental Health Educator, based in Humboldt, where she has remained for the last 21 years. With the transition from clinical Dental Therapist to Dental Health Educator being an adjustment, the changing role brought with it a greater focus on

education and prevention. With her career spanning both sides from treatment to prevention, Myrna has seen many positive changes in dental health, believing that more people are aware of the important link of oral health to general health. She has also enjoyed seeing patients from early in her career, now dentally aware young parents, as they return to her with their own children.



## Spotlight on Oral Health Month Contest '08

**Provincial Winner**

**Regional Winner**



Clara Ellert , DHE from Five Hills Health Region presented the provincial contest winner Kim Zabolotney from Viceroy Sask. with her prize and Barb Ing, DHC from RQHR presented the regional winner Vonda Hyndman from Regina Sask. with her prize. Kim and Vonda each received an Oral B Professional Electric Toothbrush for entering the contest. Toothbrushes were compliments of The Saskatchewan Dental Therapist Association.



**Watch for the Spotlight on Oral Health Month Contest in the Spring '09 edition**



# Something to Smile About!

## Dental Resource for Teachers

**A big thank you to the wonderful volunteers around the province who generously donate their time to monitor the ongoing school based Weekly Fluoride Mouth Rinse Program.**

**You are a valuable and appreciated member of the Oral Health Team!**



### ***A Teacher Resource Manual To Support Dental Health Education***

was developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Learning and distributed to all schools in November, 2003. The manual is designed to support health education for Kindergarten to Grade 5. The lesson plans are formatted in the same style as the sample units included in the *Health Education: A Curriculum for the Elementary Level* (1998) and follows the Health Action Plan Model.

**Print your own copy!**

[http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/your\\_health/ps\\_public\\_health\\_dental\\_health\\_education03.htm](http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/your_health/ps_public_health_dental_health_education03.htm)

## More sites to check out!

<http://search.gov.sk.ca/org/publications/> - Saskatchewan Health (search under dental)

<http://www.sdta.ca/tradeatooth.html> - Saskatchewan Dental Therapy Assoc. (Trade a tooth Poster)

<http://www.healthyteeth.org> - Nova Scotia

## Send us your articles, pictures and suggestions

**We would like to hear from you!**

If you have any suggestions or questions please contact:

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