



Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation

Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation Brings Oral Health Education to Classrooms Statewide

MINNEAPOLIS (May 10, 2021) – Hundreds of elementary school classrooms were able to support the oral health of their students as they received more than 17,250 backpacks during the 2021 Smiles@School program this spring.

The 2021 Smiles@School program provides oral health education and tools for students across the State of Minnesota.

Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation's Smiles@School program provides first-graders across the state with backpacks filled with tools to help them care for their teeth, including a toothbrush, fluoridated toothpaste, a water bottle, an educational booklet, and other fun items. This year's backpacks were assembled by employees at MDI, a nonprofit manufacturer in Minneapolis with nearly half its employees identifying as people with disabilities.

"Providing the tools and resources that are fundamental to building a happy and healthy life is a key part of our mission," said Eric Black, president and CEO of MDI. "We value our partnership with Delta Dental to help give kids the tools they need to improve oral health outcomes."

Research proves that following oral health guidelines helps improve overall health outcomes for people of all ages. Creating good oral health practices early in life puts kids on the right track for maintaining lifelong healthy smiles.

"This is our fifth year with the program," stated Joe Lally, Executive Director, Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation. "Our goal is to promote oral health throughout the community. Typically, we roll this program out at the beginning of the school year but because most students were learning virtually at that time, we had to delay the program. However, because of the significant impact this program has on first-graders and the importance of continuing a strong oral health routine into the summer months we felt it was still important to roll out the program before the end of the school year."

Nationally, kids lose more than 51 million school hours each year due to dental disease.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how to keep your smile healthy year-round.

For photos of the backpacks being assembled, [click here](#).

About Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation

Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation is founded on the belief that everyone deserves a healthy smile. In 2009, Delta Dental of Minnesota's parent organization sold a company and used 100% of the

proceeds to establish and fund the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation. The foundation's mission is to improve the wellbeing of Minnesotans through oral health. To date, the foundation has invested more than \$35 million to expand prevention and care, reaching more than 1 million people to promote healthy smiles statewide.

About MDI

MDI is a trusted Minnesota manufacturer and nonprofit social enterprise with the mission to provide employment opportunities and services for people with disabilities. We create high-quality plastic containers to ship, pack and store products, and offer unparalleled product assembly and packaging services for organizations across the country, from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies. By offering an inclusive workplace that allows employees to build confidence, independence and purpose, MDI's work results in dedicated employees and satisfied customers. To learn more, visit mdi.org.

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