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# Delta Dental: Brightening Smiles and Communities

And, in the process, educating about oral health

by Tyler Butler

▶ Delta Dental believes that everyone deserves a healthy smile. Its long-standing commitment to the communities it serves is evident through its organized grant program and many foundational programs and partnerships. Not only is Delta Dental of Arizona the leading dental benefits provider in state, but it is peopled with leadership and employees passionate about oral health and its importance to generations of families.

Delta Dental of Arizona has worked for nearly 50 years to improve oral health by emphasizing preventive care and making dental coverage accessible to a wide variety of employers, groups and individuals. Since 2010, Delta Dental of Arizona, through its foundation, has given \$10 million to support oral health education and disease prevention programs for underserved and uninsured communities across the state. The success of these efforts has been made possible through the company's structured oral health grants program and a few signature offerings.

The company has strategically positioned its philanthropic efforts to leverage the best of what it does in helping bring bright smiles to all. And in coordination with many local causes that include the Children's Museum of Phoenix, St. Vincent de Paul, Phoenix Children's Hospital and the Phoenix Community Toolbank, it is sharing its expertise in the most meaningful of ways.

"Oral health and dental disease prevention are at the core of everything we do. Through the Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation (DDAZF) grant program alone, which granted more than \$776,000 in 2020 alone, both Delta Dental of Arizona and our Foundation are able to support the oral health of uninsured, underinsured and vulnerable residents facing significant barriers to dental care and services," says Delta Dental of Arizona President and CEO Allan Allford.

These efforts are elevated through a series of strategic programs that enable the organization to reach the communities where it operates. One such program is Delta Dental of Arizona's Supply Donation program. Through this endeavor, the organization donates dental hygiene supplies, which supports its mission to improve oral health in Arizona.

The company even gives its signature Smile Bags each year gratis to nonprofit organizations that are providing oral health education or dental services. The Delta Dental Smile Bag is central to the company's giving efforts. Each bag consists of one toothbrush (infant, junior, youth or adult), toothpaste (youth or adult), floss, an education card and a plastic bag to hold the items.

This organization also leverages its knowledge. Delta Dental hosts Expert Voices, a roundtable discussion series that brings together local and state leaders with health experts to discuss policy, business and healthcare. These



solutions-oriented conversations focus on affordable access to health, behavioral and dental care. For each discussion, Delta Dental partners with local organizations such as hospitals and government agencies to focus on specific areas of improvement.

And through its Legislative Toothbrush Program, the company collaborates with local legislators. Delta Dental of Arizona funds educational oral health puppet shows to kindergarten through third-grade children in Title 1 schools throughout Maricopa County. Smile Bags and education cards are given to all students to ensure they can implement oral health best practices at home.

It is, however, most likely the impact of its grants and partnerships where its impact can be most easily realized. The DDAZF Grant Program supports projects and services promoting good oral health practices and increasing access to dental care. It is the intention that this funding will increase, promote and improve oral health and overall health. In 2019 alone the organization donated \$1.2 million in the State of Arizona dedicated to fulfilling this mission.

And one particular partnership will be a focal point of its mission this February. For the 12th year in a row, Delta Dental will be teaming up with the Children's Museum of Phoenix to celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month. The goal is simple: to make oral health a bit more fun. Through this partnership, the museum will host daily interactive activities, shows and educational information all related to the mouth, teeth and oral health. It almost goes without saying, however, that, during these COVID-19 times, their plans are pending and will likely take place outdoors on weekends.

Participants will be treated to a variety of interactive experiences, including art projects to teach proper brushing techniques and flossing tactics, crafts to create tooth-fairy pillows and tooth-saver necklaces, and educational opportunities to learn about tooth-saving traditions from other cultures and about the teeth of various animals. Of course, Delta Dental's Smile Bags will also be available every day to all visitors of the museum during February. ■



February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Delta Dental and the Children's Museum of Phoenix are offering a special slate of events all month.

[childrensmuseumofphoenix.org/events](http://childrensmuseumofphoenix.org/events)



Tyler Butler ("Tyler Butler | Giving in Style"), founder and CEO of 11Eleven Consulting, is a corporate social responsibility practitioner and expert leader in the corporate citizenship space. She has served on numerous national and local boards and is often cited as a subject matter expert by *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur*, *U.S. News & World Report* and more. [11elevenconsulting.com](http://11elevenconsulting.com) [givinginstyle.net](http://givinginstyle.net)

