

## One Smile at a Time...

*It's hard to justify letting a child walk around with a toothache because we ourselves have all suffered at some stage or other with that nagging pain...*



However, in our predominantly wealthy county of Somerset, lack of any dental insurance, a shortage of disposable income and too few dentists willing to deal with the frustrating process of Medicaid, make dental care an extravagance for many of our county's families.

The **John G. Locke Pediatric Dental Program** was established in 2004 to help children of low-income families. The late Dr. John Locke, D.D.S., was a great advocate of helping those in need during his fifty years of dentistry. Funded and administered by the Food Bank Network of Somerset County and approved by the Dental Society of Central N.J., the program's mission is to provide basic dental care and promote health education to eligible children within Somerset County. Eligibility for the program is carefully determined based on county income scales and continually monitored throughout

the child's enrollment.

Thanks to the compassion and generosity of some 20 dentists who participate in the program, there are now approximately 60 children enrolled. Pete Ackerman, President of the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, comments, "You've no idea how good it feels when you hear about a fourteen year old child who can smile again because he's pain-free for the first time in months. One of the best elements about this program is that it offers continued care and follow-through, not just a band-aid until the next time. Dental health education and routine hygienist appointments are encouraged by all our dentists who hope to establish a long and happy relationship with their patients."

"We're hoping that the word will spread and school nurses will call us when there's a need," says Program Development Manager, Andrea

Williams. "Believe it or not, some schools and organizations don't want to be involved for fear of liability issues or added workload but neither should be a concern. We just need to be referred to the children and then we take care of the rest. Reluctance to do so, to my mind, is a dreadful mistake."

For more information on this Pediatric Dental Program, please email [jglpdp@hotmail.com](mailto:jglpdp@hotmail.com) or fax (908) 758 5878.

*The Food Bank Network of Somerset County, Inc., annually distributes over 350,000 pounds of food, assists low-income people by paying for their prescription medication, delivers food and gifts to families in need, assists uninsured residents with eye examinations and prescriptions, and supplies donated clothing to women returning to the workplace ([www.somersetfoodbank.org](http://www.somersetfoodbank.org)).*