

# NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SMILE DRIVE CHARLOTTE COLLECTS MORE THAN 80,000 ORAL CARE PRODUCTS FOR MECKLENBURG COUNTY YOUTH IN NEED**

(Charlotte, NC, March 27, 2017) – Children throughout Mecklenburg County are smiling a little brighter today thanks to Smile Drive Charlotte, a county-wide toothbrush drive held by Charlotte-based charity, America's ToothFairy: National Children's Oral Health Foundation (NCOHF).

The inaugural Smile Drive Charlotte campaign took place throughout February, National Children's Dental Health Month, to promote the importance of children's dental health and collect toothbrushes, toothpaste and other oral care products for local youth in need. Thanks to enthusiastic community participation, Smile Drive Charlotte will deliver more than 80,000 oral care products to local children, far exceeding the campaign goal of 50,000.

With logistical support from Classroom Central and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Title I Office, America's ToothFairy distributed more than 42,000 toothbrushes to the 77 Title I Schools in Mecklenburg County. Now, every student living below the poverty line in Mecklenburg County will have access to an important basic tool for the prevention of tooth decay – a new toothbrush.

“There are many factors that affect the overall academic success of a child including basic needs such as hygiene,” stated Karen Calder, Executive Director of Classroom Central. “We were delighted to partner with America's ToothFairy to get the toothbrushes in the hands of local students who need them. It is truly a win-win when we are able to leverage our existing resources to partner to help kids.”

The remaining oral care products are being distributed to local non-profit organizations serving children and families in need. Beneficiaries include A Child's Place, Ada Jenkins Center, The Alexander Youth Network, Boys and Girls Club of Greater Charlotte, Bright Blessings, Communities in Schools of Mecklenburg County, The Harvest Center, Loaves and Fishes, Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center, Ronald McDonald House, and WINGS for Kids. Additional products are available for distribution to non-profit organizations serving youth in need in Mecklenburg County. Products may be requested at <http://bit.ly/2o0ziaS>.

More than 46,000 toothbrushes were contributed to the campaign thanks to event sponsors, SmileMakers and The Dale Jr. Foundation, as well as generous support from Charlotte area companies and individuals participating in #GivingTuesdayCLT in partnership with SHARE Charlotte.

America's ToothFairy held a series of community events to drive donations and raise awareness, starting with the “Smile Drive Thru” on February 1. With support from WCCB's Wilson's World, community members were encouraged to “drive thru” the SouthPark Mall parking lot to drop off donated toothbrushes and toothpaste for children. Throughout the remainder of the month, many local organizations served as product collection sites including all 14 divisions of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, which collected thousands of products for children.

“We are so grateful for the overwhelming generosity of the Charlotte community in response to our Smile Drive Charlotte campaign and for helping to raise awareness of the importance of children’s oral health,” said Jill Malmgren, Executive Director of America’s ToothFairy. “A child suffering from poor oral health often suffers in pain and faces ongoing health consequences. No child should go without the simple tools they need to establish positive daily health habits and prevent the pain and embarrassment of tooth decay. Now, thanks to such generous local support, children in need in our community will have access to the products they need to maintain a healthy smile. We look forward to making Smile Drive Charlotte a community event every February.”

Though largely preventable, tooth decay is the most prevalent chronic childhood disease in the U.S. More than 40% of children experience tooth decay by the time they enter kindergarten. Left untreated, childhood tooth decay can lead to severe pain, malnourishment, dangerous infections, and lifelong health consequences.

**About America’s ToothFairy: National Children’s Oral Health Foundation**

As a resource provider, America’s ToothFairy: National Children’s Oral Health Foundation (NCOHF) increases access to oral health care by supporting non-profit clinics and community partners delivering education, prevention and treatment services for underserved children. Since its inception in 2006, America’s ToothFairy has distributed more than \$17 million in donated products, educational materials and financial grants to improve oral health outcomes for children and youth in need. For more information, visit [www.AmericasToothFairy.org](http://www.AmericasToothFairy.org).

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