

# DENTAL TRIBUNE

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## News USA



Dr. Rabbit has a message for kids at the Greater New York Dental Meeting — Brush! (DTI/Photo Dental Tribune America file photo)

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## Greater New York Smiles teaches New York City children how to brush

by Jayme S. McNiff, Program Manager, Greater New York Dental Meeting

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**NEW YORK, N.Y., USA:** The Greater New York Dental Meeting (GNYDM) gives back to the communities of New York City each year by bringing together 1,300 elementary school children for the most unique children's dental health-care program in the country. For the past four years, the Greater New York Smiles program has supported oral hygiene education and dental screening for New York City's third- and fourth-grade public school children.

This year's Greater New York Smiles program involves 1,500 children on class trips, brought by school buses from various New York City Public Schools throughout the five boroughs.

The children first receive an oral health-care tutorial including a world tour with “Dr. Rabbit.” Creativity is encouraged, and the Greater New York Smiles’ volunteers are eager to involve the children in songs and dances as well as make-believe acts where children pretend they are teeth and giant jump ropes are the floss.

The Greater New York Smiles is maintained by hundreds of hygiene volunteers from New York University, New York City College of Technology and Hostos Community College as well as the dental hygiene members from the Dental Hygienists’ Association of the City of New York and the New Jersey Dental Hygienists’ Association and hygienists from various dental offices in Staten Island. The program receives sponsorship from [Colgate Palmolive Company](#), DentaQuest (Doral) and the United Federation of Teachers.

A child-friendly nutrition center is packed with plastic fruits and vegetables to teach the children how to build a well-balanced plate with all the healthy food groups while puppets “Alexander Alligator” and “BG Roo” are utilized for practicing brushing techniques.

After these tutorials, the children are able to further practice newly learned brushing techniques with the supervision of dental hygiene students at plumbed sinks with running water constructed right on the convention center floor.

Dr. Richard Rausch, general chairman, said, “This unique program offers our children free instructional oral care, oral health-care education, a dental screening and referral service which they might not otherwise be receiving.”

Oral health-care volunteers work with the children on all the steps of the program from the tutorial to the demonstration of brushing and flossing. In a short span of time, this program teaches 400 to 500 students a day within four hours.

The Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures dental van staff includes licensed dentists performing dental screening examinations. The children are given a dental report card to bring home after the dental screening as well as a goody bag containing a toothbrush and toothpaste, a dental floss keychain, a notebook, crayons and an oral health-care coloring book, pencils, erasers, a pencil case and a timer. The children also leave with a Colgate knapsack to carry all of their oral health-care items.

In 2011, Colgate exceeded its record since it started screening children at the Greater New York Smiles by screening 670 children in total compared to 500 children in 2010. Colgate’s unique involvement and valuable role has helped transform the Greater New York Smile’s Program into the most successful program to date.

At this year’s meeting, more dental chairs are being provided so more teeth screenings can be performed, therefore allowing more children to have their teeth checked.

“The Greater New York Smiles program is a one-of-kind program because it gives back to the community without asking for anything in return,” said Dr. Robert Edwab, executive director of the GNYDM. “It’s a chance to offer a unique clinical aspect to urban dental and hygiene students while bringing an awareness of dental access issues in NYC to oral health-care volunteers, teachers and chaperoning parents who travel with the children to the Javits Convention Center.”

With obesity on the rise among children who live in New York City and the chronic health issues associated with poor oral hygiene, these children are at the highest risk and are most vulnerable.

The Greater New York Smiles instills healthier nutritional choices focusing on the dangers of too much sugar, while supplying the tools for a healthier living and future.

The 2012 Greater New York Smile's Program promises to be an even larger event by increasing its space next to the registration at the GNYDM with discussions of incorporating two Colgate vans in 2013.

To view an up-close and in-depth look at the Greater New York Smiles program, visit the United Federation of Teacher's website, [www.uft.org/videos/students-greater-dental-meeting](http://www.uft.org/videos/students-greater-dental-meeting) for a short video. The program is sponsored by the New York County Dental Society representing the Dentists of Manhattan and the Second District Dental Society representing the Dentists of Brooklyn and Staten Island.

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