

# Mobile Dentist Van Coming to Morgan

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News and Features*

Help A Child Smile, a mobile dentistry program that provides dentistry for children in several Georgia counties is coming to Morgan County. Next week Morgan County children can take advantage of their services on July 26 when the mobile dental van will make its first appearance in the area at the Morgan County Health Department. From there, program members hope to initiate a relationship with the school board so that return visits can be made at area elementary and middle schools as well.

Working in conjunction with school systems and county health departments, Help A Child-Smile offers comprehensive dental care including exam, cleaning, x-rays, sealants, cavity treatment and education. Because the van comes directly to the schools, many hard-working parents are relieved of transportation duties.

Dr. Mark Shurett founded the Help-A-Child-Smile program in 1994 with the idea of "taking expert dentistry to children who might not get the proper dental care otherwise." So far the

program has succeeded with over 50 schools participating in Rockdale, Fulton and Coweta counties. Shurett, with the help of other dentists, hygienists and coordinators operates the program from his private practice in Conyers.

Group Administrator Dr. Darryl Smith attributes the success of the program to the convenience it offers parents, the thoroughness of the dentistry and the wonderful staff. Help-A-Child-Smile ensures complete treatment through follow-up visits every six months for existing patients. Furthermore, the program provides education in addition to dental services for its young patients. "A lot of kids have the idea that they go to the dentist to have their teeth pulled," Smith explained, "But we are here to keep them from having to have them pulled. Once they get the education, they are on the road to good dental hygiene."

Of course, Help-A-Child-Smile could not exist and succeed without the support of hard workers. Three dentists and three hygienists serve children through the program. On any given day, the mobile office is staffed with one

licensed dentist, one certified hygienist, two assistants, one expanded duty assistant and one x-ray technician who doubles as the driver. Working on a rotating basis, they provide dental services aboard a van that has three dental chairs.

The van itself provides a comfortable atmosphere for children. Not only are they surrounded by their peers but they are also given specialized care by staff members. Lead teacher at Newnan Crossing Elementary School Carole Criswell has even observed staff giving [special attention to] children who are scared or hesitant.

"These people are used to working with children and they enjoy working with children so that the kids will come away with a positive attitude toward dentistry," Smith explained.

Help-A-Child-Smile accepts most regular insurance as well as Medicaid, Peachcare and cash payments for services. They also require that parents fill out a medical history and consent [form] for all children receiving dental care. ....