

Mayor Coleman Announces New Invest Saint Paul Partnership to Make Dental Care Accessible to Thousands of Low Income Children

(Saint Paul) – Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman today announced a new partnership through the City’s *Invest Saint Paul* initiative. The partnership will provide dental care to low income children across several neighborhoods in Saint Paul. The Mayor made the announcement this morning during an event at the Rice Street Library with corporate and non-profit partners including Delta Dental of Minnesota, Twin Cities United Way, Children’s Dental Services (CDS), and 3M.

“Growing partnerships that enhance the livability of our communities is our vision with *Invest Saint Paul*. This initiative will help provide access to dental care for those who need it most, and I appreciate the resources our partners have devoted to closing this gap in health care access,” Coleman said.

Through the Mayor’s *Invest Saint Paul* initiative, Smiles Across Minnesota will provide dental services in and around identified *Invest Saint Paul* areas. As service providers, Children’s Dental services will expand its current school-based program to an elementary school in the North End this fall.

Over the summer, CDS will begin to provide dental service in the city’s libraries and other community centers as a way to reach more children in need of care outside of the school setting. Delta Dental of Minnesota and Greater Twin Cities United Way have provided significant local funding and 3M ESPE is donating thousands of sealants to make the program a success.

Minnesota children experience high rates of dental decay, which is caused by a bacterial infection in the mouth and is the most common chronic infectious disease among *children* in Minnesota. Eighty percent of the disease is expressed in 25 percent of the children, typically low income and uninsured children. Much of this disease can be linked to changes in habits of parents and child care providers alike, who are giving children more processed foods at earlier ages, including fruit snacks, juice boxes, sodas and other bottled beverages that do not contain the fluoride found in tap water.

Delta Dental of Minnesota and Children’s Dental Services launched Smiles Across Minnesota in 2006, in conjunction with Oral Health America’s Smiles Across America program. Smiles Across Minnesota is a statewide initiative to address the acute oral health needs of low-income and uninsured children.