



the smile

Summer 2026

How the AAPD Foundation Fights for Children's Smiles

We are in a child oral health crisis. Federal funding cuts of up to 70% mean 20 million children could lose their only access to dental care. For many families, community clinics are the only option for care – and support for those clinics is disappearing. They need our help.

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“I’m not letting a child walk out in pain”

CommuniCare in San Antonio, TX, is one of the clinics that make up the child oral health safety net in the U.S. CommuniCare never turns a child away, regardless of their family's income. Thanks to a Three Year Access to Care Grant from the AAPD Foundation, their dentists can focus on one thing: the child in the chair.



"I'm not going to let a child with an infection or pain walk out the doors without being seen.... The child and their treatment needs are at the forefront of my thought process, not where the money is coming from. And that's because of the funding from the AAPD Foundation," said Dr. Andrea Frere, Pediatric Dentist at CommuniCare.

For one San Antonio mom, finding dental care for her kids had been an exhausting, expensive search. Until CommuniCare. "It took me forever to find treatment because out of pocket, it's so expensive," she said. "Once I came here, I got it done within a week. It was such a blessing, such a burden that was lifted off my shoulders."

Within a week of walking through the door, her children were seen, treated, and taken care of. Now her son loves brushing his teeth, and she finally has somewhere she can always bring them.

That's what just one grant makes possible.



Watch their story and see the impact of your donations

Scan the QR code to watch on YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmiD3y1ZZAw

A NEW ERA BEGINS

Welcome Dr. Jessica Y. Lee as AAPD & AAPD Foundation CEO

As of July 1, we welcome Dr. Jessica Y. Lee as the new Chief Executive Officer of the AAPD & AAPD Foundation. A longtime AAPD member and AAPD Foundation volunteer, Dr. Lee has held numerous roles within both organizations, including as AAPD President and member of the AAPD Foundation Marketing Committee.

Dr. Lee's career exemplifies excellence and impact. She most recently served as the William M. Demeritt Distinguished Professor of Pediatric Dentistry and Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development at the University of North Carolina Adams School of Dentistry, where she helped shape the future of dental education and pediatric dentistry. Her leadership within AAPD and the AAPD Foundation spans nearly 30 years.

Dr. Lee has consistently championed innovation, advocacy, and collaboration. Her work includes groundbreaking contributions to improving access to dental care for children, advancing oral health literacy, strengthening Medicaid policy, and developing pediatric care delivery models, as well as mentoring the next generation of pediatric dental leaders.



It is a tremendous honor and privilege to serve as the next CEO of AAPD and the AAPD Foundation.

Dr. Jessica Y. Lee
Chief Executive Officer of
the AAPD & AAPD Foundation

“Together, we will build on our strong foundation to expand access, embrace innovation, and empower pediatric dentists to deliver exceptional care.”

Introducing AAPD Foundation President Dr. Deven V. Shroff!

We are delighted to announce Dr. Deven V. Shroff as AAPD Foundation President! Dr. Shroff was Chair of the Grants and Programs Committee for seven years before stepping into this new role. Grants are at the heart of our mission, and he was indispensable in ensuring the most compassionate, effective programs helped kids receive Foundation support.

His commitment to this work is deeply personal. Born in India, he grew up without the resources many take for granted – including, at times, something as simple as a toothbrush. When his family emigrated to the U.S. seeking a better life and education for their





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Dr. Deven V. Shroff
AAPD Foundation President

children, dental care for him meant occasional visits to a county clinic. "I know what it means to not have a dental home," he says. That firsthand understanding of unmet need has shaped his life's work ever since.

Dr. Shroff worked multiple jobs to put himself through college and later earned the Army's Health Professions Scholarship for dental school, leading to a decorated military career. He went on to become a partner in one of Maryland's largest pediatric dental practices and a dedicated volunteer and leader with the AAPD Foundation.

Dr. Shroff appreciates the full breadth and scope of the need for Access to Care Grants, paired with the sad reality of diminishing resources for safety-net clinics. "While government support and other foundations retreat, we must expand our reach to help treat more children," he urges.

As Grants and Programs Chair, he played a pivotal role in helping us make a real impact on the lives of thousands of children – and as President, that impact is only set to grow.

Join us in welcoming Dr. Shroff as President! The Foundation is honored to have a leader who brings both experience and heart to everything he does.

PATIENT STORIES

“Yes, We Can Care for Him Here”

Elias* is one of thousands of kids whose lives have been changed because of your compassion. Elias is a 16-year-old boy originally from Syria, now living in Georgia, and when he arrived at Ethnē Health's dental clinic with his mother, they carried a long history of being turned away.



Ethnē Health is an AAPD Foundation grantee.
They turn no patient away.

Through an Arabic interpreter, his mother shared their experience. They had already visited four different dental clinics, including pediatric offices, hoping someone could help. Each time, they were told the same thing: the clinic could not treat him. They were not set up to support a child with his needs, especially without a shared language to guide his care.



So when Ethnē's team told her, right away, "Yes, we can care for him here," she was surprised. After so many closed doors, she did not expect a different answer.

As staff got to know Elias, it became clear how much he had already overcome. He lives with a physical disability and uses a wheelchair for mobility. Ethnē's team ensured he felt comfortable and welcome from the moment he arrived. With the help of an interpreter, they listened carefully and explained each step of the visit.

That day, Elias received the care he had been seeking for so long – a full dental exam, X-rays, a cleaning, and fluoride treatment.

Throughout the visit, Elias was warm, patient, and engaged. His mother watched with quiet relief as her son was finally treated with the attention and respect he deserved. By the end of the appointment, her initial surprise had turned into deep gratitude. For Elias and his mother, this visit was more than a dental appointment. It was a moment of being seen, welcomed, and cared for without barriers.

Clinics like Ethnē Health are vital to the child oral health safety net. Because of your generosity as a supporter of the AAPD Foundation, and our ongoing Access to Care Grants, Ethnē Health was able to provide urgently needed dental care and the stability of care Elias needed in the months to follow. Elias and his mother spent time healing instead of stressing.

**patient name changed for privacy*



You help us turn pain into hope every time you donate. Thank you for giving kids like Elias a healthy smile and a new beginning.



Access to Care Grant Applications Now Open!

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITIES THAT NEED IT MOST

Kids deserve equal access to dental care, and right now, they don't have it. That's why we fund **Access to Care Grants** to community organizations that provide free or low-cost dental care to children. We recognize the best way to help kids get the care they need is by working with local organizations that understand their community's oral health needs.

Eligible organizations are non-private, located in the U.S. or its territories, and focused on treatment, preventive care, education, and building long-term healthy habits in pediatric patients. Since 2010, we have issued \$12.2 million in grants to 191 organizations – and your organization could be next!

Scan the QR code or apply at aapdfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/ to see full eligibility requirements, read the grant guidelines,



**Grant amount
up to \$30,000**



**Application deadline
Sept. 18, 2026**



**Grant period
April 2027
to March 2028**





A SHARED COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN FIRST

Thank you, Sprig Oral Health!

At AAPD 2026, the AAPD Foundation and Sprig Oral Health Technologies launched the Sprig Challenge to rally support for children's access to dental care. Throughout the weekend, Sprig matched every donation made at the Foundation's booth, up to \$10,000.

The response from the pediatric dental community exceeded expectations. Combined with Sprig's matching contribution, the Challenge raised a total of \$53,481 for the Foundation!

This outcome comes at a critical time. Cuts to Medicaid and federal funding threaten to limit access to dental care for millions of children nationwide. Funds raised through the Sprig Challenge will support the Foundation's nationwide network of grantees providing direct care to children and families who face significant barriers to treatment.

To Brenda Hansen, Founder and CEO of Sprig Oral Health Technologies, and the entire Sprig team: THANK YOU for your generosity and commitment to children's health! Sprig's mission to advance safer, more effective dental care for children closely aligns with the Foundation's own work to expand access to pediatric oral health services.

Thank you to everyone who contributed during AAPD 2026. Your support will have a direct and lasting impact on children in need of care across the country. Let's continue to advocate for every child to have access to the care necessary for long-term health and wellbeing.

For more fun at AAPD 2026, check out the Healthy Smile Hero's recap blog!



You can't run on **30%**

Federal support for kids is disappearing.

Medicaid funding **cuts**
of up to 70% means
20 million children
will lose their only
access to dental care.

Kids shouldn't
pay the price for
budget cuts.

Your gift makes a difference



When the pediatric dental community comes together, we expand access to care and invest in children's futures.

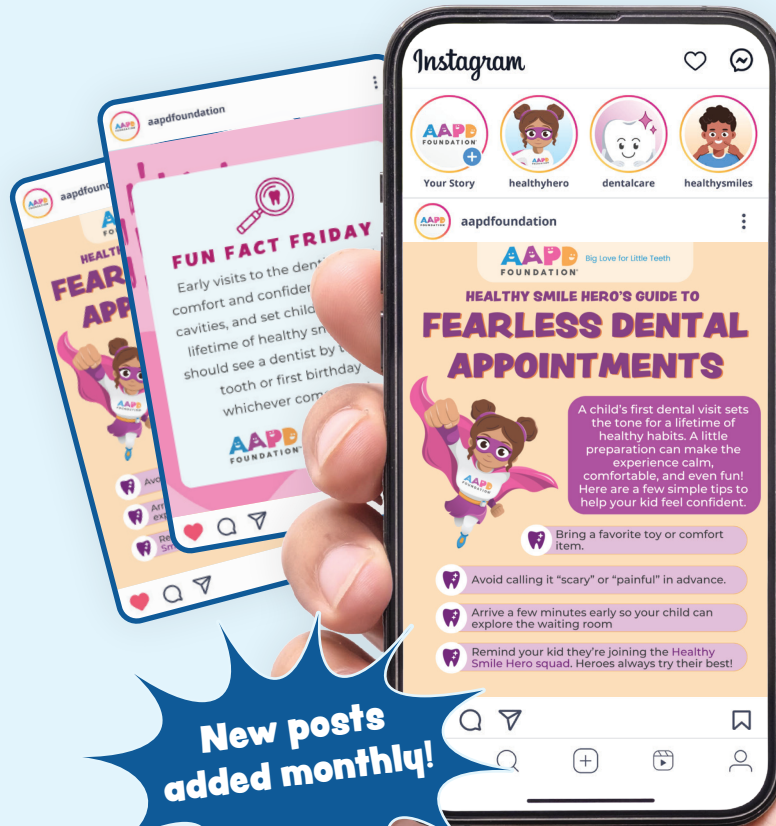
Brenda Hansen

Share Healthy Smiles Beyond the Chair: The Hero Library

You have exclusive access to the **Hero Library** filled with downloadable tools that help kids build healthy habits and celebrate every dental win.

In addition to printable activities, brushing charts, and certificates, the Library includes ready-to-post social graphics and captions to help your practice stay consistent, visible, and family-friendly online in just a few clicks.

Scan the QR code
or check out
aapdfoundation.org/hero-library
to gain access to
the **Hero Library**



**New posts
added monthly!**