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“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

—FERRIS
BUELLER

JOHN HUGHES’
*iconic characters
—and their
timeless style*

**DR. MIRA
ALBERT** *leads
Team Smile*

On Q

In an exclusive interview with the Blackhawks winning coach, Hinsdale’s Joel Quenneville shares how he enjoys celebrating the team’s victories with the community

JWCMEDIA

HINSDALE’S
JOEL QUENNEVILLE

GIVING BACK

GIVING CHILDREN A REASON TO SMILE

Dr. Mira Albert of Brush Pediatric Dentistry will be lead dentist at this year's Team Smile event with the Chicago Bears, which provides children in need access to dental care for free.

WORDS BY **ELIZABETH HOPE** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JOEL LERNER**



On August 1, Dr. Mira Albert of Brush Pediatric Dentistry and a team of about 20 dentists will partner with the Chicago Bears organization for the Team Smile event, set to take place at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais. As many as 150 children from the area who don't have easy access to dental care will receive much-needed services like restorative dentistry and extractions and preventative care procedures at the event. This

is the seventh year for Team Smile and the fourth year that Dr. Albert, who will serve as the lead dentist, has been involved with the program. "Each year the program improves," says Dr. Albert. "Team Smile is an opportunity to take my skills as a pediatric dentist and give children the benefit of much-needed dental treatment for free."

Dr. Albert is an obvious choice for the lead role at the event. She has been and continues to be a strong advocate for pediatric dental

GIVING BACK

health in the Hinsdale community and Chicago area, and now in the country as well. She was recently named a spokesperson for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, which she hopes will become an important platform to help spread the word on oral health for children throughout the United States. "There is so much that can be done at home and in schools to educate our children and parents on preventing dental disease, first and foremost establishing the dental home by age one," she says.

Dr. Albert is actively involved in the community in other ways, co-chairing the underwriting committee for the Hinsdale Junior Woman's Club 2016 benefit. And in June, she was invited to be a featured speaker at the Academy of Sports Dentistry Symposium in Chicago, delivering a presentation on the management of acute dental trauma in children to more 200 sports medicine and dentistry professionals. "It was exciting to be in the company of some of the finest doctors in healthcare," she says.

We talked with Dr. Albert about the upcoming Team Smile event and asked her to share some of her best advice for parents when it comes to helping children care for their teeth.

This isn't the first time you've participated in the Team Smile event with the Chicago Bears. Tell us about your continued involvement with the program. Why is it so important to you?

We are fortunate to live in an area where the access to dental care for our children is not an issue. But it's not like that for every child in our country—even just outside of a major city like Chicago. Some children simply can't afford to have dental treatment, and some children simply don't have access to a dental home—especially a pediatric dental home. As we know, dental disease is the most chronic disease of early childhood; it's 17 times more common than asthma. It is responsible for more lost days of

school than any other disease. Many of the children that visit the event are suffering from very advanced dental disease, no doubt causing pain.

What does it mean to be the lead dentist for the event? What responsibilities do you have?

I am in charge of reviewing x-rays, confirming diagnoses, and assigning patients to one of the 20 dentist volunteers based on that provider's comfort level with a particular procedure. Most of the doctors are not pediatric dentists, so they have different skill levels and abilities to handle kids. Pediatric dentistry is a different ball game, and treatment of children is not just a matter of whether the child and dentist are comfortable. While we count on our general dentists in the community to aid in meeting the care needs of children, pediatric dentists have an additional two years of specialized training, arming us with the skills to manage the pediatric patient and render the most appropriate treatment.

What's it like working with the Chicago Bears organization for this event?

The Bears organization has been wonderful. The allure of the players is exciting for the children, the parents and many of the volunteers. But more importantly, they provide a physical space to render treatment and they provide some of the financing for the event.

You are a strong advocate for the oral health of children in this country. Why do you feel so compelled to be involved on a higher level to advocate for dental health?

Six in 10 children have a cavity by the time they are five years old. That's six too many. Dental disease is preventable. It can be well controlled with diet, oral hygiene and fluoride. These are things that everyone can do once they are educated properly. Research has shown that since the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry policy change of

establishing a dental home by the first birthday, the rate of cavities has gone down. I believe this has to do with the valuable information we as pediatric dentists impart on parents and on children.

I think my practice has had a tremendous impact here in Hinsdale, letting families know when to bring their children in and guiding their care. At Brush, we see children acclimate to the dental office setting sometimes by the age of two. I see school-age children every day who are excited to be in the no-cavity kid club and truly understand how to stay there. We spend a tremendous amount of time during our patient appointments talking with parents and kids about their oral health, its importance, and how to maintain it. This information sets a lifetime of good habits and we are proud to lay the foundation in a fun way that kids can understand. Pediatric dentistry doesn't stop with small kids; we continue to monitor growth and development all the way through the wisdom teeth, ensuring that our teens and college kids are managed properly and graduated to an adult dentist at the appropriate time.

What is some of your best advice for parents when it comes to helping their children care for their teeth?

Come early and come often. See your pediatric dentist by your child's first birthday and stay with him or her until they graduate you to a general dentist. Make sure when you choose a dentist you can answer the following questions:

- Were you asked for a complete medical and dental history?
- Was the dentist gentle but thorough with the examination?
- Were you informed about the stages of your child's dental development, the causes and prevention of disease, and appropriate home care?
- Were your questions treated with concern and respect?
- Was the visit positive to your child and did he or she have an age-appropriate response to the visit?