

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 7, 2008

School kids bite into oral health awareness

Oral health promotion spills over to environmental protection with the launching of Zero Cavities, Zero Waste Project by the Department of Education (DepEd) and Colgate-Palmolive Philippines, Inc. (CPPI).

The project aims to foster care for oral health and environment by encouraging schools and students to recycle used Colgate sachets, and turn these into useful things such as bags, purse, kits, folders, etc.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus described the program as “a creative way to encourage student participation in a worthy project that addresses two important concerns of our time – oral health and environmental protection. The first one involves personal responsibility... and the second involves societal concern.”

The launch is among the highlights of Oral Health Awareness Week (OHAW) held from October 6-10.

Activities in the week-long celebration include Sodium Fluoride mouthrinsing, reinforcing of the 7'o clock toothbrushing habit among grade 1 pupils, dental services in collaboration with the Philippine Dental Association's (PDA) local chapters and lectures on oral health promotion in schools nationwide.

CPPI helps bring proper oral hygiene to Filipino school children through Colgate's Bright Smiles, Bright Futures (BSBF) program, implemented under the DepEd's Adopt-A-School Program (ASP) and Health and Nutrition Center (HNC).

“Intensive education is one sure way of addressing common problems in oral health” said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus as he commends CPPI for its initiative to promote sustainable oral health care.

During the opening ceremonies held at the DepEd Central Office, Lapus also inaugurated the Beacon Center/ BSBF Center of Excellence, which will serve as a hub where DepEd and partner institutions can plan, fine tune and launch programs that promote oral health among children.

It was established through an agreement among DepEd, CPPI and Global Child Dental Health Taskforce (GCDHT). Located at the DepEd Central Office, the Beacon Center/ BSBF Center of Excellence was refurbished and provided office and dental equipment by CPPI.

The Education chief said that the Beacon Center is a place where educational materials including print and film on oral health care can be accessed by visiting children.

Lapus was joined by CPPI President & General Manager Lucie Claire Vincent, DepEd Undersecretary Vilma Labrador, ASP Executive Director Mari Paul Soriano, HNC Director Thelma Navarrez, CPPI Marketing Director Bong David,

BSBF Manager Jac Saez and GCDHT Director Dr. Raman Bedi in inaugurating the center.

DepEd's Adopt-A-School Program facilitates private sector assistance for public education. It was re-launched in September 2006 by Secretary Lapus to help generate more resources and interventions from the private sector. Through the Adopt a School Act of 1998 or RA 8525, private entities who assist all public schools in the country can avail of the 150 percent tax incentives.

ASP Executive Director Soriano said, "When we relaunched ASP, we found that private sector can contribute immensely on the health and nutrition needs of public school children."

Some 10 million school children from the country's public schools have benefited from the DepEd-Colgate partnership since 1997.

In 2007, DepEd and Colgate launched the 7 o'clock toothbrushing habit program, where Colgate provided toothbrushes, toothpastes and oral health educational materials to almost 100% of grade one pupils nationwide.

This year, close to 2.7 million toothpastes and toothbrushes have already been provided to grade one pupils.

Soriano noted, "While our grade one pupils are guaranteed a year's supply of toothbrushes and toothpastes through BSBF, the GCDHT will assist DepEd in the funding for toothpastes and toothbrushes of students in grades two to six."

For more information, interested donors and partners may contact Ruel Bonito, Adopt-A-School Resource Mobilization Manager at 638-86-37, 638-86-39 or email asp_secretariat@deped.gov.ph.

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