

## **2006 Oral Health Coalition Annual Report**

The Committee, known as the Benton Franklin Oral Health Coalition, sponsors an annual Dental Day for children who do not have access to dental care. In 2006 more than 150 children were served. A similar number is expected on February 3, 2007 when scores of dentists, hygienist and assistants donate their time at three sites to treat children. Uninsured adults with limited means also have difficulty accessing dental care, but so far, the coalition has been unable to respond to their needs. However, in co-operation with the efforts of Grace Clinic, we hope to remedy that. In addition, the Coalition advocates for the use of fluoride in public water supplies as the most cost effective prevention mechanism to reduce oral health disease including caries.

The 2005 Smile Survey, conducted on State and County levels and released in 2006, showed that our children continue to suffer from tooth decay. In Benton and Franklin Counties, 1764 children were surveyed. We found that over 70% of the 2nd and 3rd grade children already had cavities and/or fillings; this is 10% higher than the State average. In addition, one in three Benton-Franklin elementary school children did not have access to a dentist when needed. While it is true that income is significantly associated with a child's oral health and nearly 80% of the children who are eligible for free and reduced cost lunch had decay or fillings, it should be noted that over 60% of elementary children not eligible for free or reduced cost lunch also had decay or fillings.