

REVERE JOURNAL

September 28, 2009

A community functions well when its residents have access to essential services—from electricity and transportation, to education and health care. To foster the development of the next generation, Massachusetts must have systems in place to keep all of its residents healthy from head to toe. In recognition of World Heart Day this past Sunday, we must all team up to ensure that we are protecting our overall health by guarding the gateway to the body- the mouth.

Surgeon General David Satcher said it best when he stated that: “Oral health is a critical component of health.” Dental decay is a bacterial infection of the mouth which has long term consequences on our health. Currently, nearly half of all children in our state have experienced dental disease by the time they reach third grade. These children are at risk for other illnesses as they grow, including heart disease. They also have trouble eating, speaking, and paying attention in school.

It’s time to tackle this issue with proven solutions that benefit the health of Revere residents. To slow the incidence of dental decay and associated disease such as heart disease, we must work together to ensure that public health programs provide children and families access to school and community-based dental clinics. These programs deliver important preventive services such as oral screenings, dental sealants that cover and protect the teeth from disease, and fluoride treatments that make tooth enamel stronger and more resistant to decay.

As a physician and the Medical Director of the Revere Family Health Center, I work to keep my patients and our community healthy. In honor of World Heart Day, I urge residents of Revere to keep our communities free of dental disease by asking your lawmakers to make oral health programs a top policy priority. When we make a commitment to fund oral health programs, we connect kids to opportunities for a healthy future.

Somava Stout, MD is the Medical Director of the Revere Family Health Center.