

# Rx for reading

Your "Read for Health" newsletter • Spring 2008

Carol Scoggins, Editor

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## FORWARD:

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Florida Department of Health  
State Read for Health Coordinator



read for health  
Florida Department of Health

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports poor oral health can profoundly affect an infant's or child's health and well-being. Early tooth loss caused by advanced tooth decay can result in failure to thrive in young children. Oral health problems can lead to impaired speech development, inability to concentrate on important early learning experiences, and absences from school or child development programs. Children with chronic dental pain are unable to focus, are easily distracted, and may have difficulty completing schoolwork. Their performance in school may deteriorate.

Dental Caries (the disease process leading to tooth decay) is the most common chronic childhood disease — five times more common than asthma.

In honor of Children's Dental Health Month and to encourage proper oral health maintenance as part of daily health promotion and prevention, the Read for Health Initiative partnered with the Florida Dental Association and Colgate to celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month in February. Volunteers were asked to visit pre-school, Kindergarten and first grade classrooms across the state and read, "Dora the Explorer's – Show me your Smile book. The ability to read, write and understand letters and numbers is a basic component to maintaining good health and eliminating health disparities.

The Read for Health Initiative would like to extend a personal thank you to Colgate for their generous donation of tooth brushes and toothpaste and to the Florida Dental Association for their donation of mirror clings with instructions on proper tooth brushing. The collaboration of our partners provided wonderful opportunities for our reading volunteers as indicated in their personal experiences.



# THE TOOTH FAIRY OF COLLIER COUNTY

I am reminded almost every day that I hold the greatest position within the Collier County Health Department. I cannot help but agree. I am the Official Collier County Tooth Fairy. As the Tooth Fairy, my mission is to visit schools, kindergartens, libraries and health fairs to introduce and discuss the importance of oral health care. Topics of discussion range from how to use a toothbrush, diet and beverage choices, and visiting the dentist and hygienist. I am delighted to give to all the children I visit a toothbrush, paste, and dental floss along with a Ratoncito.



The Ratoncito is the Spanish version of the Tooth Fairy. The Ratoncito the children receive is a tiny box just the right size to hold a baby tooth tucked under a pillow.

As the United States is experiencing an increase in early childhood caries, the importance of education for the youngest people of Collier County is becoming more critical on a daily basis. On the days I hang up my wings and perform my dental hygiene duties I witness, and hear, the results of poor oral care. These children are living the result of a diet high in sugar and the constant access to sweets and milk.

Beginning this past summer, I was invited to visit Collier County libraries. The book I chose to read was "Dora the Explorer's – Show me your Smile!". Not only is Dora an extremely popular character but she always has an important lesson to share. This book is the perfect choice for the Health Literacy Reading Initiative. When I read to children "Dora" offers the opportunity for interaction not only for colors and shapes, but most importantly, to introduce young children to the people and activities within the dental office. The story

**As we reach out to children providing information about health they will become stronger, healthier people.**

describes young children enjoying a pleasant visit in the dental office. The reader of the story has many opportunities to include additional information about

a dental visit. Dora finds herself with a cavity needing treatment. This is when I find it helpful to talk about what can cause a cavity. Food and beverage choices are a very important topic for this age group.

Dora the Explorer opens the door to a dental visit and a healthier world for children. As we reach out to children providing information about health they will become stronger, healthier people. With the positive reinforcement provided by Dora along with the human contact of reading to children, our youngest children can learn to make healthy choices for themselves. Reading is our most valuable method of learning. In this day of computers and limited personal interaction I feel strongly the Health Literacy Reading Initiative is a positive direction we as health care providers, along with families, must support and help develop. I hope others have enjoyed the opportunity of sharing with children as I now do on a daily basis. The reality of planting a seed that can grow into a healthier individual is a strong experience. I plan to continue this path for years to come and will enjoy and share each smile I see.

Janice H Siegel, RDH, BS  
"Tooth Fairy,"  
Collier County Health Dept.

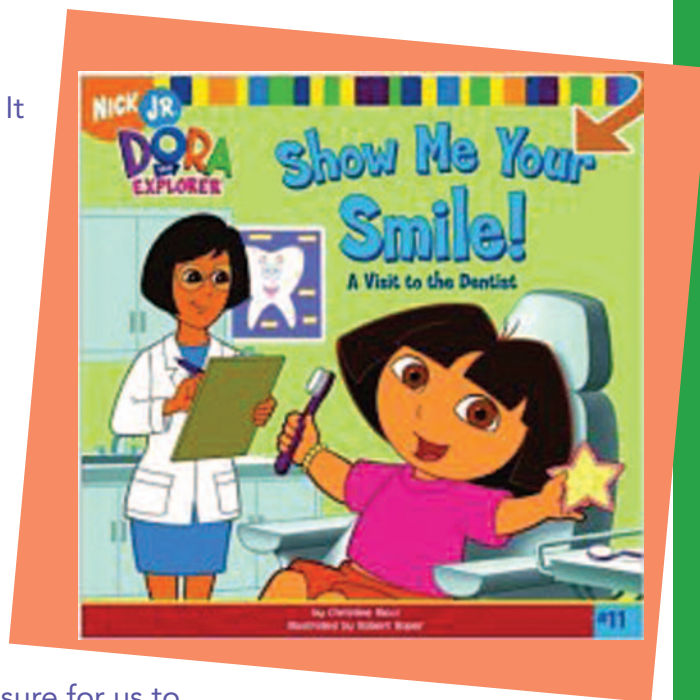


## Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

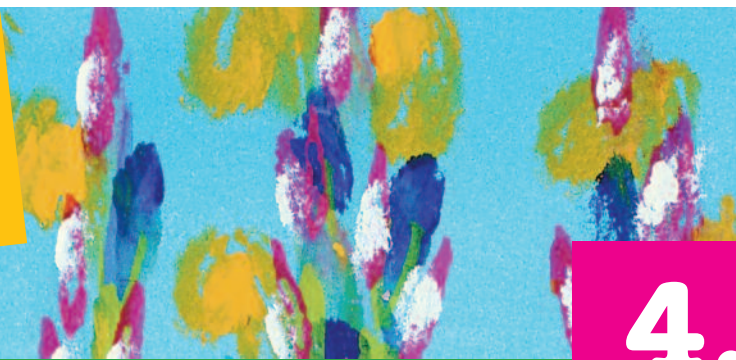


The Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County (ELC) nurses provide health screenings and education for the 100+ child care centers in our county. The Read for Health program helps us with our mission by providing wonderful educational books that are read to the child care classes. In addition, the Read for Health program coordinated the donation of toothbrushes and toothpaste for Children's Dental Health month. Escambia County has a very high poverty rate and

funds are always tight. Dental care is one of the biggest hurdles that we face in our county in regards to children's health. Relatively few pediatric dentists accept Medicaid and it is even tougher for the group of children who are uninsured to receive dental care. Many of the children served by our program have never seen a dentist and a large number does not own a toothbrush. It appears that education is one of the most important factors in preventing the sometimes horrific dental issues that prevail. If we are to make a real difference we must start early with preventative messages. The ELC nurses repeat positive health messages many times throughout the year to our children. The children are encouraged to take the health messages home and share them with their parents. The goal of our program is to help prepare our children for kindergarten and to instill positive health messages into their young minds. It has been a pleasure for us to go into the child care centers armed with the "Dora the Explorer Show Me Your Smile!" book provided by the Read for Health program to read and provide a toothbrush, toothpaste and a sticker for each child. The "Dora" book holds the attention of our three and four year old population. The Read for Health program is very appreciated by the ELC Nursing Team. It enables us to touch children's lives not only by improving literacy but with improving the health of our children.



**Shannon C. Leon, RN, BSN**  
**Community Health Nursing Supervisor**  
**Early Learning Coalition of Escambia**  
**County**



## Dora the Explorer visits Volusia County

If knowledge is the key to success, then reading is truly fundamental.

As a Volusia County Volunteer School Health Nurse, I've been able to help teach our little ones about a few of the important things we all should do to maintain good health.

In October we read about the 'Berenstain Bears' going to the doctor for routine check ups, and why 'shots' are really important. After a long discussion about things that could happen if you never had a check up, or a vaccination, they all had a turn to listen to their own heart. What fun it was for me to see their expressions when they heard the beating.

This month I read about 'Dora the Explorer' going to the dentist. We discussed the correct way to brush, how often, how to use floss, and what foods are good, or not so good, to maintain strong healthy teeth.

With the Department of Health's Read for Health Initiative, and their ability to collaborate with partnerships like the Florida Dental Association, and the generous donations from corporations like Colgate, each child, with squeals of joy, was given a goody bag filled with supplies and information for good oral care, reinforcing what we just learned.

I sure hope there are a lot more stories for me to read, and gifts to give the children. This sort of learning really is **FUN**damental

*If knowledge is the key to success, then reading is truly fundamental.*



**Marilyn DeCesare**  
**Volunteer RN**  
**Volusia County Schools**

## Quotes From Our Volunteer Readers

"Thanks again for a wonderful community health project."  
**Pam Basinski, Orange County Health Department**

"I look forward to reading to the children! They enjoy it so much!"  
**Debra Snow, RNC, BSN, Children's Medical Services-Rockledge**

"Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to promote health literacy and health promotion in our young population."  
**Tammy Moser, RN, Lee County Health Department**

"Our staff, the students and the teachers really enjoyed this event. We look forward to participating next year."  
**Rosa Martin D.M.D., Dental Director  
Miami-Dade County Health Department**

"The Santa Rosa County Health Department is thrilled at the opportunity to participate in another Read for Health Initiative program. We have had an unexpected "bonanza" of staff signing up to read at elementary schools."  
**Ginny Hinton, MPH, Mentor Coordinator  
Santa Rosa County Health Department**

" I look forward to participating in this amazing program."  
**Laney Kennedy, RN, Gulf County Health Department**

*The Read for Health Initiative would like to showcase your efforts in addressing health literacy. Please send your photos, if available, and your articles, 250-300 words or less to:*  
**Carol Scoggins, State Read for Health Coordinator at:  
carol\_scoggins@doh.state.fl.us**

