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## **Kentucky's Oral Health Wellness and Disease Prevention Program: An Innovative Partnership**

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*Developing unique and varied partnerships to reach at-risk kids and communities is key to tackling current and future oral disease. According to the 2001 Kentucky Children's Oral Health Profiles, in which 5,603 third- and sixth-grade children in Kentucky's public schools were screened, 28.7% had untreated tooth decay. The Kentucky Oral Health Wellness and Disease Prevention Program began with an objective to develop a statewide 4-H camp program focusing on oral health wellness, disease prevention, tobacco education, and the promotion of oral health professions among preteen and teenage campers.*

*The University of Kentucky College of Dentistry, Division of Dental Public Health, agreed to collaborate with the 4-H program at the College of Agriculture Extension Service by providing a research title faculty member to develop and implement the pilot 4-H camp program for four camps in the summer of 2003. The overwhelming success of the pilot 4-H camp initiative in 2003 led to the program expanding to nine camps in 2004. More notable, however, it precipitated a unique partnership between the two colleges. The jointly appointed faculty member focused on developing oral health wellness and disease prevention resources for extension agents to use on a county-by-county level to educate, promote oral wellness, remove barriers to access, and create a pipeline of oral health professionals from rural communities.*

*The initial findings of the Kentucky Oral Health Wellness and Disease Prevention Program indicate that networking conducted between non-traditional partners can produce original, expectantly sustainable programs that benefit all counties of the Commonwealth and each family within, while leading the country in innovative approaches to oral health wellness, education, and disease prevention.*