

“Hailey’s Story”

by Amanda Overlock

Hailey is a 4-year-old girl who loves playing in water and riding on swings. She was born with a chromosomal abnormality which has significantly affected her overall development. She is unable to verbally communicate with others, so we must rely on her non-verbal cues to determine what she is thinking, feeling, and needing. Hailey would often express her frustration through aggression. It was rare that she would look at peers or adults in the face, and even rarer that she would smile at anyone. Hailey was often uncooperative and did not want to join her peers in any activities. Hailey protested anyone brushing her teeth and wouldn’t allow a toothbrush in her mouth; though she very frequently had her hands and various objects in her mouth. She often rubbed her cheek with her hand.

We knew she had tooth decay, and a plan was in place for her to receive her dental care in an operating room (OR) at the local hospital. Several appointments had been made and then canceled due to unforeseen circumstances. In October 2010, Hailey’s mother brought her into the New York University College of Dentistry (NYUCD) Dental Outreach Clinic in Machias to have her teeth examined. She was able to be seen on the Washington County Children's Program Dental Program's mobile dental unit, the “Tooth Ferry.” That day, Hailey had four severely decayed teeth removed. NYUCD dentists also called her local dentist and arranged for her OR visit to happen soon in order to get the rest of her teeth taken care of; she was in need of sedation for this to occur. On October 22, Hailey had 11 fillings and 7 root canals during this OR visit.

Within a week of having her dental needs met, the WCCP staff began to see many changes. Now she smiles and grins as she is riding her tricycle down the hall, exhibiting playful behaviors. She allows her teeth to be brushed, even initiating the activity by going to the cabinet to get out her toothbrush herself! She “mouths” objects much less frequently. Her aggressive behaviors have severely decreased, and she is much more cooperative about carrying out daily tasks and routines. She joins her peers at group activities and participates more independently during her therapies. She recently had a dental screening and fluoride treatment from a dental hygienist with WCCP as a follow up to the NYUCD clinic. She was able to let the hygienist look at her teeth with only minimal protesting, which is great progress for her. She also had no signs of decay in her mouth. The NYUCD Dental Outreach Clinic made an incredibly positive impact in multiple aspects of Hailey’s life. She visited the clinic again when the team returned in April 2011.