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Dentists offer free-care day for kids

Services available to uninsured children 6 to 11

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POST FALLS – Getting into Post Falls Family Dental's free February children's clinic will be a bit like trying to score tickets to see Hannah Montana.

So many Post Falls children are in need of dental care that when the clinic opens its phone lines next Thursday, appointments for its Feb. 2 free-care day will likely be filled within 30 minutes.

This will be the 13th year the clinic offers free check-ups, cleanings, fillings, extractions and other work to 6- to 11-year-olds who have no dental insurance and are not eligible for public assistance.

"There is such a huge need. There are a lot of kids caught in that gap," said dentist Ken Lynn, who is offering the free dental care along with dentist Erin Elliott and the practice's three dental

hygienists.

Well over 50 percent of Idahoans – adults and children alike – are without dental insurance or aid, said Cynthia Taggart, spokeswoman for the Panhandle Health District.

Another problem is that even with Medicaid assistance, parents can have difficulty finding dentists to see their children. Taggart said that's because Medicaid reimburses just 40 cents on the dollar for treatment.

"Dentists are pulling out of accepting

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Free dental care day

Where: Post Falls Family Dental Center, 313 N. Spokane St.

Who: Children ages 6-11 with no dental insurance or state aid

When: Feb. 2

Appointments: Call 773-4579 next Thursday at 8 a.m. to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins will be welcome the day of the clinic from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

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that," she said.

Tooth decay is increasing among children ages 2 to 5, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released last year. That report found that 28 percent of those preschool-aged children had tooth decay. Thirty-eight percent of children 12 to 19 years have tooth decay, the report said.

The CDC also reported that 70 percent of children with cavities don't have fillings.

Lynn predicts his clinic will see 70 children on Feb. 2.

Those who can't call in on Jan. 31 to make appointments will be able to visit the clinic during the free Saturday service and wait to see the dentists and hygienists on a first-come, first-served basis.

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