NEWS RELEASE

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Four-year-old Riley Holthus was a little tense as he prepped for dental surgery Friday. Holthus was having an operation for crowns on two back teeth and a reduction of a Gemini tooth (partial division of a tooth bud attempting to form two teeth). Butterflies, dragonflies and jack-o-lanterns in the operating room may have made it easier for the youngster, however.

The insects and Halloween decorations were part of the surgical caps offered by Surgery Coordinator Jeanette Sartain at Box Butte General Hospital. BBGH is a major player in the annual Dental Day, that offers free dental services to 219 children across the Panhandle. Kelly Dean and Janelle Hansen of Panhandle Public Health District coordinated the event with the assistance of contacts at each of the participating clinics, hospitals and communities.

Riley's older brother Colton received treatment at the office of D.N. Taylor, Jr., DDS in Alliance. Taylor is the spark plug behind the decision by the University of Nebraska Medical Center's School of Dentistry Dr. David Brown's decision to bring Dental Day to the Panhandle six years ago. The program began in the Beatrice, Fremont and Norfolk areas as a dental outreach program and quickly expanded into western Nebraska at Dr. Taylor's urging.

Taylor and Peter Maxwell, DDS are just two of a dozen Panhandle dentists participating. Prescreening at dental offices in Bridgeport, Chappell, Crawford, Hemingford and Oshkosh referred children into the clinic sites in Alliance, Chadron, Gordon and Sidney where they received services on Dental Days 2010, June 4 and 5. The Gordon Dental Days is at the Gordon Memorial Hospital.

Dean, a public health nurse with PPHD, said Gordon had 27 dental and hygiene students involved in Dental Days, under the supervision of seven UNMC faculty members; Alliance had nine students and four faculty; Chadron had four students, one faculty supervisor, Sidney had nine students, and four faculty members. The total UNMC personnel for the Panhandle-wide effort were 49 dental and hygiene students and 20 faculty members. These totals to do not include the dental assistance and other staff from UNMC, nor local personnel such as nursing and surgery staff, hospital and medical clinic staff completing pre-operative histories and physicals, as wells the dental clinic staff in the above-named communities.

"I can't begin to describe how much cooperation takes place between all involved," Dean said. "There were so many people helping in just the planning stages of the program from both ends of the state, let alone all those involved in the actual procedures during Dental Days. And, we haven't even talked about the planning for food, lodging and travel. It's pretty impressive."

"The dental students from UNMC get to see the good life here in western Nebraska, while getting a wide variety of hands-on experience in our dental clinics. So, the students and the kids benefit greatly."PPHD and UNMC appreciate the time, effort and use of dental offices from the following dentists. Without them, Dental Day would not be possible."

- Dr. Jacoby-Bridgeport and Hemingford Dental Clinics.

- Dr. Low and Dr. Krueger - Chappell.
- Dr. Moody - Crawford.
- Dr. Jensen - Oshkosh.
- Dr. Neal and Dr. Hlavinka - Sidney.
- Dr. Taylor and Dr. Maxwell - Alliance.
- Dr. Thrasher- Chadron-CAPWN.

For additional information about Dental Day, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.