**Smiles Change Lives provides access to orthodontic care for youth in all 50 states.**

**Kansas City is the leader in giving.**

Smiles Change Lives (SCL), a nonprofit organization that helps low-income children obtain orthodontic treatment, is now serving all 50 states. Since its inception in Kansas City in 1997, SCL has changed the lives and smiles of more than 1,200 children due to the dedication of orthodontists and referring dentists nationwide.

Talented and caring orthodontists have teamed up with Smiles Change Lives to provide pro bono, comprehensive treatment for approved SCL patients. Each partner orthodontist relies on SCL for its thorough application and screening process which provides them with the most qualified, motivated children for treatment.

Kansas City professionals have been the leaders in supporting this program. With 34 partner orthodontists, 222 children in active treatment and nearly 100 pending applicants in the Kansas City area, the local program is at capacity. "In the Kansas City metro area, we have more applicants than openings with our current providers. It's our job to try to help as many kids as we can, so we are currently inviting orthodontists to join our program," states LeAnn Smith, Chief Operating Officer for Smiles Change Lives. SCL is also encouraging long-term providers to treat additional SCL cases.

"The increase in support from so many of our home town orthodontists has been amazing," asserts Ms. Smith. “We’ve made a lot of changes to our program during the last few years and it is heartwarming to have the unwavering dedication of so many doctors who give to SCL in so many ways.”

Initially, SCL paid a stipend to the orthodontists to help cover their costs. This policy was phased out two years ago for several reasons. First, many providers did not want to be paid for their participation in a charity program. This allowed the organization to expand more quickly without increasing the fundraising needed to reimburse providers. In addition, the changing economy created an increase in demand from children nationwide and a decrease in donations. While these changes did result in some attrition to the program, most orthodontists understood the fiscal implications of reimbursing providers. The organization does owe some providers payments from previous years, which it intends to repay as soon as program revenue stabilizes.

Dr. Dustin Burleson, a long-time SCL provider adds, “I’ve always had wonderful SCL patients assigned to my practice and I am happy with my decision to take on more SCL cases this year to help reduce their backlog. It doesn’t make sense to get reimbursed for my charity work. It does make sense that I give to a program that supports the kids who would otherwise not have access to treatment.”

As the organization continues to address their capacity issue in Kansas City, there is tremendous growth nationwide as more orthodontists sign on to become providers. Information on becoming a provider is available at [www.smileschangelives.org/learnmore](http://www.smileschangelives.org/learnmore) or by emailing partner@smileschangelives.org.

SCL is also honored to have just been named a Give Kids a Smile Program Champion. Working with the ADA-sponsored programs nationwide will give the organization an efficient way to reach low-income families unaware of this affordable orthodontic option. SCL serves families who meet the following criteria:

- Youth ages 11-18, not already wearing braces
- Children with a moderate to severe malocclusion
- Documented family income at or below 200% of Federal Poverty Level
- Good oral hygiene as indicated on dental referral form from general dentist
- Motivated to comply with program guidelines and treatment plan
- Approved patients pay $500 to participate in the program

Families are encouraged to visit [www.smileschangelives.org/qualify](http://www.smileschangelives.org/qualify) to determine if they meet the financial guidelines. Those interested in applying can review program guidelines and download an application at [www.smileschangelives.org/apply](http://www.smileschangelives.org/apply) or by calling 888-900-3554.