

# Bright Smiles, Healthy Futures: Championing Dental Health Awareness for Kids

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## OBJECTIVE

In celebration of National Children’s Dental Health Month, this student-led initiative—spearheaded by Dr. Krishna Priya Upadrasta—set out to promote oral health education among children and their caregivers. Over a six-month period, we hosted two engaging webinars, reaching more than 500 participants in both festive and familiar settings. Our mission was to deliver meaningful, age-appropriate dental education in a supportive environment. We emphasized preventive care essentials—like brushing twice a day, flossing, choosing tooth-friendly snacks, and maintaining regular dental checkups. To make these lessons fun and memorable, we provided dental kits, nutritious snacks, and playful items like bubbles. Each session was supported by custom learning materials and pre/post surveys to track progress. This initiative fostered a warm and empowering platform where families could grow their knowledge and confidence together.

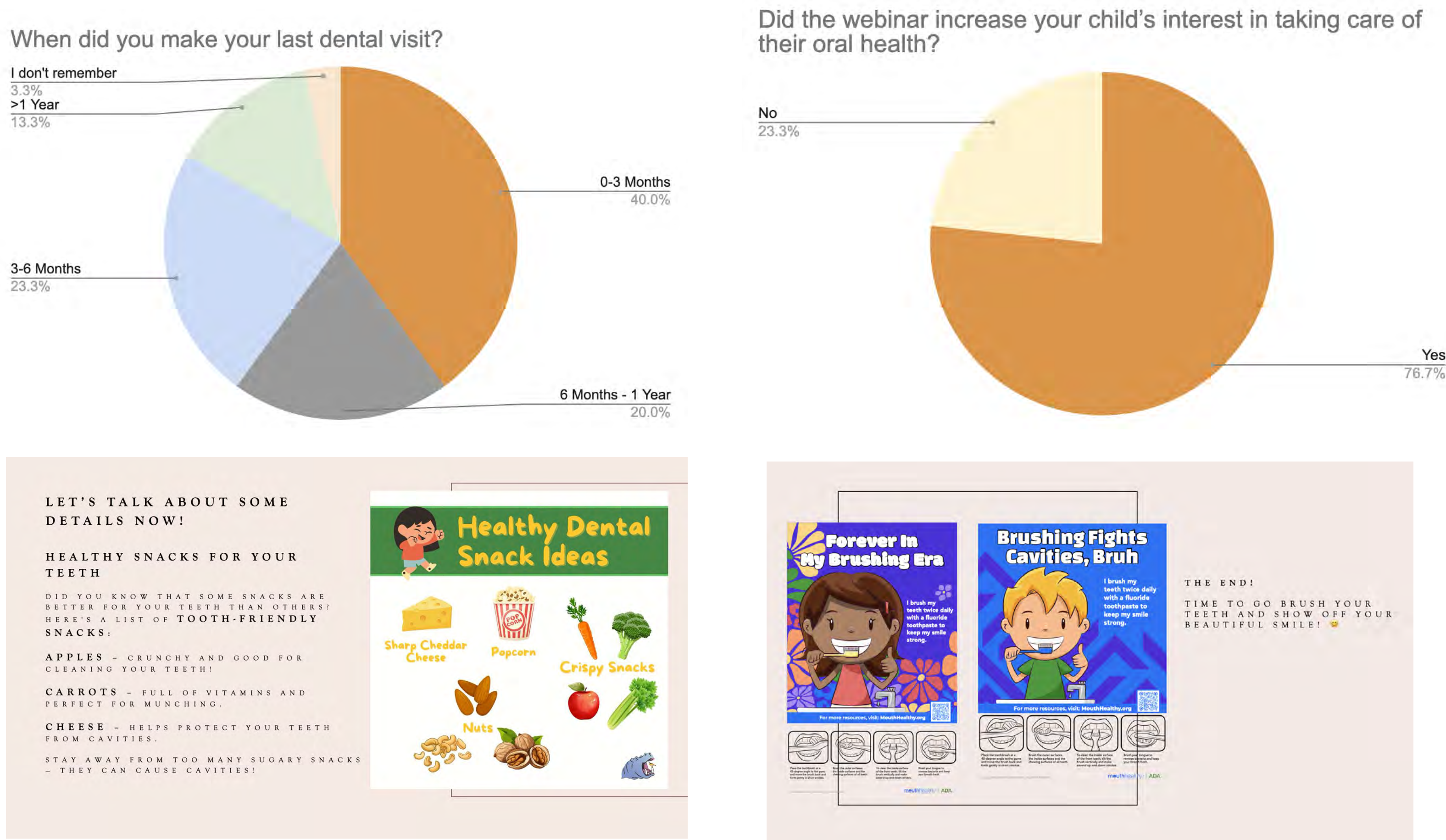
## METHODS

Two webinars were conducted as part of this initiative: one hosted at a large-scale community event organized by the Telugu Association of Greater Sacramento (TAGS), and another held in an intimate setting from a transformed garage space—personally cleaned and prepared by the lead presenter. This contrast showcases the adaptability of community outreach, proving that where there is a will, there is a way to empower future generations. Toothbrushes, fluoride toothpaste, bubbles, and oranges were distributed to participants to encourage hands-on learning. A pre- and post-webinar survey assessed changes in dental health knowledge and behaviors.



## RESULTS

Through this initiative, we reached over 500 children and their caregivers with accessible, hands-on oral health education. Survey responses revealed significant improvement in participants’ understanding of daily dental hygiene, the importance of biannual dental visits, and making healthier snack choices. Notably, many caregivers shared they felt more confident supporting their children’s dental habits. The feedback from parents and community leaders was overwhelmingly positive, emphasizing how engaging formats and relatable settings help close knowledge gaps. One particularly meaningful aspect was the use of a transformed garage space as a cozy event venue—proof that heartfelt commitment and creativity can turn even the most modest setting into a powerful platform for community learning. By combining culturally relevant content with enthusiasm and resourcefulness, this project demonstrated how student-led programs can inspire positive, lasting change in community health behaviors.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Oral health education is most impactful when it meets families where they are—whether at a cultural event or in a transformed garage. Preventive care habits start early, and fun, engaging tools make all the difference. Student-led outreach can spark lasting change in public health and empower future leaders.



## CONCLUSION

- Early and engaging oral health education—especially when delivered in a child-friendly and culturally relevant way—can build lasting healthy habits.
- Student-led outreach programs, powered by creativity and passion, can create meaningful change and promote community wellness.
- From vibrant community halls to a transformed garage, this initiative showed that no space is too small when the mission is big and the heart is all in.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the mentorship and support of Dr. Kim Benton, whose guidance was pivotal to this project’s success. We also thank Dr. Swetha Sabbineni for her active collaboration, and the Telugu Association of Greater Sacramento (TAGS) for partnering in this educational effort. Special appreciation goes to the participating families and children whose energy and involvement brought this initiative to life.

## REFERENCES

- Educational content and survey instruments developed by Dr. Krishna Priya Upadrasta.
- Community outreach conducted in collaboration with TAGS and supported by faculty advisors.
- All materials and activities aligned with public health education standards and evidence-based practices.

## PROJECT INNOVATION

Dr. Benton is currently the lead Director of PHCC Sacramento, UOP Dugoni Dental School. Dr. Upadrasta is a current IDS 2026 student at UOP Dugoni Dental school, PHCC, Sacramento



# **OKU Sutro Excellence Day Project Cover Sheet**

**Project Title**

**Full name(s) and class year(s) of all project collaborators**

*Example: Jane Smith, DDS 2022; John Smith, DDS 2022*

**Project Category**

**Enter your abstract text here (max 300 words)**