**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE … March 15, 2016**

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**JKD Enters 10th Year of Giving Kids Healthy Smiles**

[NE Minn./NW Wisc.] When Two Harbors native and Registered Dental Hygienist, Stacey Anderson, first started delivering oral health services directly to Northland schools ten years ago, she was shocked to learn how much these services were needed.

"I knew there was an access to care crisis," begins Anderson, Founder/Executive Director of Just Kids Dental, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. "But I never dreamed how wide the true scope of need had become. Often our staff can't believe how much pain some students are in – bleeding gums, abscessed teeth, decay so bad, they can see down to the roots. It has been so rewarding to help these children get the care they need, so they can concentrate on their school work instead of the pain."

A change in state law allowed Anderson to answer a personal desire to make a difference. The law change enabled Registered Hygienists to offer their services outside the traditional dental office environment. Having learned about mobile, school-based dental services launched elsewhere in the country, she spent hundreds of hours researching how to bring this type of service to our region.

" 'You want to do what?' " recalls Anderson about first approaching schools officials. "The idea of having a dental clinic at a school and taking kids out of class was so new. There was a lot of resistance at first." This resistance gave way to welcome acceptance when schools started seeing the good that came from JKD's visits.

Anderson also says the schools appreciate how efficiently staff operates, respectful of the teachers' and students' time. JKD served 158 students that first school year. Since then the nonprofit has served thousands of children and prevented the cost of emergency care for low-income, uninsured families.

 *"Over half of the students at Northern Lights will receive care this year from Just Kids Dental with no charge. So that is a very big contribution, not just to Northern Lights but to our whole community."* Robyn Deshayes, Principal, Northern Lights Elementary, Superior

**Just Kids Dental** provides oral health screenings, dental cleanings, fluoride varnish applications, sealants, oral health and nutritional education, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss to underserved children across the region. It eliminates access barriers to care by delivering these services directly to 30 schools in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. Its services have expanded beyond school clinics to an Oral Health Education program that will be presented to area schools and 100 other children's organizations this year.