

For Immediate Release: Tri-Cities, WA – October 15, 2009.

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Tri-Cities' "OPERATION CASH for CANDY"

Local Health Providers Help Kids Say Thanks to the Troops with Halloween Candy Buy-Back

Several Tri-City area health professionals have joined together to take candy away from kids this Halloween! At first glance it sounds harsh, but it's for a good cause – to help the kids say thanks to the troops overseas fighting to keep us safe. This Halloween, local healthcare offices are buying back excess or leftover candy for \$1.00 a pound and letting the kids sign up to win Kids-R-Us gift certificates, iPods, and other prizes.

"It's a very noble cause" says event organizer Dr. Lee Ostler, general dentist in Richland. "We're thrilled to support our troops – plus we'll have some fun with the children in helping them earn a few bucks. They can still have fun with Halloween but now they can put some money in their piggy banks as well as say thanks to the troops." The idea was inspired after Dr. Ostler learned of the efforts of Operation Gratitude, a California organization which sends care packages to the troops and accepts donations including candy from dentist candy buy-back projects across America. Ostler notes that "if this is good for my patients, it would be better to organize several offices and to expand the reach into the entire Tri-City community and help more kids participate in saying thanks."

With sugar consumption rising each year, dentists and parents are glad to get some candy off the streets. "It's probably better to have the excess candy in the hands and mouths of adults rather than our children" says local children's dentist Dr. Rusty Walker of Kennewick. "And the dollar a pound ought to make this about as easy as taking candy away from a baby", says a smiling Walker. Dr. Todd Cooper, a Kennewick Oral Surgeon notes that in addition to cavity prevention, this kind of project also helps send a message that too much candy isn't healthy. He notes that in addition to tooth decay it can lead to hyperactivity and weight gain, and that in some cases it can lead to broken teeth and damaged braces.

The Cash-for-Candy idea is a big hit with local area veterans who already understand the power of getting these care packages, plus they say that the donated candy is put to good use in working with and befriending the "locals" to get intelligence information about IEDs and other dangers in the war zones. Drs. Linda Bascom and Rolf Weurch, both area endodontists and former military say they are thrilled to be able to participate and to be able to help the kids and the troops. Other local veterans are also excited to see this kind of project in our community. "When I was in Iraq I really liked it when we received letters and care packages from people back home. I think that "*Operation Cash for Candy*" is a wonderful idea and I know all that all the troops will really appreciate it," says Purple Heart recipient Bobby Touchette of Prosser who served in Iraq from 2003-2006.

More information about Operation Cash for Candy is available at the web site:

OperationCashForCandy.com which lists the participating healthcare offices and drop-off time and location information, as well as features a "Local Heroes – Wall of Fame" listing of some area veterans being recognized for their service to our country.