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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

The second annual "Operation Cash for Candy" is underway! An expanding group of area health professionals have again joined together to take candy away from kids this Halloween! It may sound harsh but it's all in good fun and it's for a good cause - to help the kids and our community say thanks to our military troops fighting to keep our world safe.

Local health professionals are buying back excess and leftover candy for \$1.00 a pound. "It's a noble cause" says event organizer Dr. Lee Ostler, a Richland dentist. "It teaches some good health principles and it gives our community another way to support the troops! Plus the kids can earn some extra money and have fun doing it!" Ostler decided that if it was good for his patients "it would be better to organize many others together and to expand the reach into the entire Tri-City community and help more kids participate in saying thanks."

Dr. Ostler and his group of healthcare workers are now working with our very own local Tri-City based "Operation Thank You", a veterans group and their families and supporters who are working to build patriotism and support the military. Each year Operation Thank You sends care packages to the troops and accepts donations including our local "Cash for Candy" buy-back project.

With sugar consumptions rising each year, and tooth decay still a prominent worry for dentists and parents alike, "Operation Cash for Candy" will get some extra candy off the streets. "It's better to have the excess candy out of the hands and mouths of the kids and doing something useful elsewhere" says local children's dentist Dr. Craig Ritchie of Kennewick. Dr. Brier, another participating dentist in Richland says that "the bribe of a dollar a pound should take some of the sting out of taking the candy away from the kids". Drs. Jon Crawford, and Ron Marsh, both area Oral Surgeons agree that decreasing and controlling candy consumption has positive health benefits for the mouth as well as the body. Dr. Loren Anderson a Kennewick dentist 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. Rolf Wuerch, an endodontist, and Michael Breier a Richland dentist, are both former military and 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 thought "*Operation Cash for Candy*" was a great idea last year and it's still a great idea this year! 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.