

# Candy campaign lets kids help out others

## Group of dentists form a united front for candy buy-back program to benefit United Way

By BRITTANY TATE

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It's not rare a occurrence to see children giving back to their communities or helping out fellow residents in need, and Dr. John Weaver knows this.

For the past several years, Weaver Orthodontics has hosted a candy buy-back program the weekday after Halloween to promote good oral health and to get children to send off their candy to troops overseas — a positive difference, he says, that can be felt in the lives of those around them.

This year, however, promoting good oral health is about to get a new meaning. From now until Nov. 19, Weaver Orthodontics and 14 other dentist offices will be participating in the "Ultimate Candy Challenge" buy-back program to not only advocate for dental awareness, but to also benefit the United Way of Coastal Georgia.

"In the past at Weaver Orthodontics, we have always chosen a local charity or family in need, but this year we have extended it out to the (Glynn County) Dental Society," Weaver said.

"Some of these kids are unaware of those who are in need, not that they live very fortunate lives. Many don't know what the United Way does. This is a way for them to pay it forward in a way by giving their candy back, which is going to a charity and helping out others," he said.

The candy will go overseas to the armed forces through Operation Shoebox. As in years past, for every bucket donated individuals will receive a raffle ticket for an office-specific prize. In turn, each participating dentist will donate \$5 to the United Way. Monetary donations in

Submitted photo

Dr. Jeff Capes transforms for the candy buy-back program, that will benefit United Way.

### Participants

Participating offices include:

- Dr. Jeff Capes
- Dr. Dean Boyer
- Dr. Brandon Clements
- Dr. Darryl Daniel
- Dr. Suzanne Haley
- Dr. Jason Hooper
- Dr. Scott Morrison
- Dr. Zach Powell
- Dr. Glenn Sasser
- Dr. Tom Sayer
- Dr. Tom Smith
- Dr. Paul Thompson
- Dr. John Weaver
- Dr. Michael Wommack
- Dr. Hank Yeargan

place of the candy will also be accepted.

With 15 dentists involved in this year's event, Weaver said they have each pledged to raise \$1,000 each to hopefully donate \$15,000 to United Way by Nov. 19.

It's something Dr. Jeff Capes, an oral surgeon at Coastal Oral Surgery, campaign chairman for the United Way for 2014-15 and a spearhead behind this year's buy-back program, sees as an opportunity for residents to get a bird's-eye view of what all the organization does for the community.

"My primary goal is to get what the United Way does out to the community and open their eyes to what all it supports," Capes said of the nonprofit organization that supports 22 partner agencies and 30 programs within the community.

"When you ask most people about it, they don't know of all it does. Most think of it as a thermometer on the side of the road that creeps up. It's an after-school program, it helps families live healthier lives, and it provides a safe place for families in crises. I believe in what it does for the community and it's parallel with my beliefs and values," he added.

Beyond helping out the nonprofit organization with money, Capes believes it also gives children who are donating candy



Submitted photo

Dr. John Weaver lounges on a large pile of candy during a previous year's candy buy-back initiative.

a new perspective on what it means to lend a hand to their neighbors.

"We all want to feel like we're a part of something and that we have made a difference. By kids participating, they really get that sense of making an impact right here at home," Capes said.

The differences youth will make, Capes says, are threefold: being generally healthy by giving up gobs of candy, giving back to the men and women in the armed forces that serve and protect our country, and making a small difference on a local scale.

Dana Haza is appreciative of what the candy buy-back represents.

"Our community will benefit from the treats. Whether it's an Almond Joy or a Milky Way, candy has the potential to change lives by supporting our 22 partner agencies and the amazing work they do every day," said Haza, president and CEO of United Way of Coastal Georgia.

Getting children to participate in helping needy kids and families locally by giving away their candy is just another great way of showing just how important it is to be charitable.

"The ability to make a difference is ageless, and by young people wanting to help and support their neighbor, they can be a part of helping their community," Haza

said.

"The generosity of people donating will help reach our goal of \$1.2 million."

The United Way's fundraising campaign ends on Jan. 31, and so far it has collected 31 percent of its goal.

While Haza, Capes and Weaver agree that it's important to give back, they also know how imperative it is for children to be generally healthy.

"It gives us a chance to explain the importance of dental awareness because health starts at the top and the top is our mouth. The healthier the mouth is, the healthier you'll be," Capes said.

Weaver adds: "It's not just about the United Way. It's also about coming together to promote good dental health. This is a multi-layered event that has brought unity among the dental community ... (and) it's a fun way to raise dental awareness and give back to the community."

The funds received from the buy-back will go to the campaign and allocation committee, which will disperse monies to the 22 agencies in Glynn and McIntosh counties.

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