

You Should Know: Healthy



Smiles, Healthy Children

by Benjamin Lund, Editor, *Dentaltown Magazine*

Dentaltown Magazine sat down with Dr. Beverly Largent, president of Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children, to learn a little about the Foundation of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)

What is Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children?

Largent: Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children's mission is to support community-based oral health initiatives providing Dental Homes to children whose families cannot afford dental care. We do this primarily through our Access to Care Grants.

Tell us about your current initiatives and how you are going about implementing them.

Largent: Since the primary focus of the foundation is to foster access to care for underserved children in the United States, each summer we accept letters of intent from organizations seeking matching dollars to achieve our goal of treating children. Our members, both academic and practicing dentists, review the letters of intent to determine which organization will be asked to submit a full proposal. Once the full proposals are submitted, they are reviewed by our Grants and Programs Committee, as well as our Reviewer Subcommittee. The awards are made at our annual AAPD meeting in May. To date we have awarded more than \$700,000 in access to care grants in 17 states. This important work is embraced by our committee members who spend many hours reviewing hundreds of grant proposals.

How can general dentists become more involved with you? What benefits can general dentists who work on pediatric patients receive from becoming more involved with you?

Largent: General dentists can certainly become involved by donating to our foundation. Many individuals feel that we are supporting services that are worthwhile and know that if they personally do not have the opportunity to give services to the underserved, they are participating in charitable work through the foundation. All programs we support must have general or pediatric dentist involvement.

What are some of the concerns you hear from general dentists who see pediatric patients?

Largent: I think the number-one question on everyone's mind, be it practitioner or foundation, is the shape of

health care going forward. This impact will be on provider, patient, as well as philanthropic organizations. I hear of the difficulty in providing care under Medicaid programs, including reimbursement, and many onerous compliance regulations. General dentists have voiced a concern about dealing with the very young child, and incorporating the age-one dental visit into a general practice.

How do you see the role of "corporate dentistry" impacting pediatric dentistry as a whole?

Largent: The academy, as well as the foundation, supports dental care provided according to the established guidelines of the academy. Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children places an important focus on providing a dental home for children. Ongoing care, where all needs can be met in a compassionate, family-centered way, providing emergency care and directing advanced care is our goal.

Can you speak to the gender split (male vs. female) in pediatric dentistry? Do you see a trend of more female dentists doing more pediatric dentistry?

Largent: I am proud to work in a profession where there is an almost equal share of both men and women pediatric dentists (47 percent female to 53 percent male). The number of female dentists who graduate from residency continues to increase annually, and I believe this continues to strengthen our profession.

From an organizational perspective, we have great members of both genders, and I personally do not view any difference in the quality, professionalism or knowledge of male or female members. Pediatric dentistry is a great place to be, male or female, and this is seen in the continued growth of our profession. ■

