Community Involvement a Practice-Build

Dr. Drew Carlin

Getting involved in the community can be a great way to give back, as well as raise awareness of your practice and bring patients to your door. But with so many deserving causes, it can be a challenge to direct your energy where it will be most effective.

“If you are trying to make an impact, you have to do more than just get your logo on one banner at one baseball diamond one summer,” says Dr. Ann Bynum, a pediatric dentist sharing a location with her general dentist husband, Dr. Matt Bynum, in Greenville, SC. ADA New Dentist News spoke with three dentists about how to approach community involvement for maximum impact.

Leverage Teachable Moments

Dr. Drew Carlin was startled by the conversations he had with parents about the sheer quantity of candy their children were consuming. “It was clear that the kids were getting so much candy at Halloween that it was easy for them to hoard it in their bedrooms, and I was seeing the negative results.”

Dr. Carlin implemented a candy buy-back program at his Erie, PA pediatric dentistry practice that pays kids $1 per pound for candy they donate. The donated candy goes to military personnel serving overseas. “The kids got a little cash, the parents got to get rid of the excess candy without having to be the bad guy, and our practice was featured in both the newspaper and the local TV news,” notes Dr. Carlin.

Dr. Bynum, who also hosts a candy buy-back program, leverages other teachable moments, such as promoting free dental visits for children younger than two years old. “Parents need to be educated that good oral health starts early,” explains Dr. Bynum, “and I want parents to know their children have a dental home and not be stuck in an emergency room because their toddler fell in the bathtub and hit a tooth.”

Get Them In Your Door...

In addition to education, both the candy buy-back and the free visits for young children bring patients inside the practice, a strategy endorsed by Dr. Alexa Vitek, who built a general dentistry practice from scratch in DeWitt, MI. “I had great success donating custom whitening trays for a silent auction fundraiser,” she recalls, “it literally put new people in my chair.”

Dr. Vitek also organizes events for the merchants in the shopping center where her practice is located, including a holiday prize drawing. “Prize winners come to my practice to pick up their prizes, presenting another opportunity for someone to see firsthand how friendly and welcoming our practice is.”

...and Get Yourself Beyond the Practice Doors

“It’s easier to write a check than to participate in something,” observes Dr. Vitek, “but when I’ve participated it has paid off. I donate mouth guards to my patients who play sports, and I’ll go to a soccer game and talk with the moms watching on the sidelines.”

Community involvement also makes great content for your social media presence. “Matt and the boys shave their heads every year for St. Baldrick’s,” explains Dr. Bynum, “I have been a cancer survivor. In addition to raising money for charity, the dentists post videos online of the Bald Bynum team.”

Be Willing to Experiment

Not every one of Dr. Vitek’s outreach efforts has paid off. “The things that always work will always be there,” observes Dr. Vitek, “but it’s important to also explore new ideas. No way to know what will work until you try. I paid $5 to attend a PTA charity auction, and that gesture made a positive impression on those parents, contributing to a positive word of mouth. In retrospect, that’s one of the best $5 investments I’ve ever made!”

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“There’s no magic bullet when it comes to community involvement,” adds Dr. Bynum, “you need a lot of bullets. And you need to hit the target a lot.”

You Don’t Have to Say Yes to Every Request

Dr. Drew Carlin noted that his practice is located near several rival high schools. “There’s no way to be a booster for one of the teams without alienating the other one,” he explains, choosing instead to support a softball team where a hygienist’s son is a player.

“I buy cookies, I sponsor yearbook pages, I support mission trips,” Dr. Bynum says. “If it’s something big and impersonal, like buying a table for a charity gala, that’s not me. But if it’s an individual working to make a difference, I relate to that. And I want to support those efforts, as many as I can.”

New Member-Only Benefit—Ethics Hotline

Facing a thorny ethical issue? Now you can call the ADA and request the new ethics hotline.

“The hotline isn’t a place for legal guidance,” explained Dr. Jennifer Enos, a member of the ADA New Dentist Committee. “Instead, it’s an easy, confidential way for members to get some advice on what the next steps would be when navigating an ethical dilemma.”

Dr. Enos believes that the new benefit is especially valuable for new dentists. “Some of us are running a practice, but many more of us are working in a practice. Getting a fresh perspective on a situation can be enormously helpful.”

To access this new benefit, members can call the ADA at 312.440.2500 (or use the toll-free number on your member card) and request the ethics hotline. After confirming your membership, you’ll be asked to provide some information about the issues, and you’ll receive a call back from a member of the ADA Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs (CEBJA). This dentist will then discuss the application of the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct to the specific situation.

The goal is for the member to receive a response within two or three days. However, if a member requests a rapid response, volunteers and staff will work to make that happen.

Dentists who use the ethics hotline will need to provide their ADA member number, but details of their cases will be kept in strict confidence.

The anonymous data regarding ethics dilemmas presented through the hotline eventually may aid the ADA in identifying newly emerging ethical concerns.

“It will be helpful to all of us to collect data about the real-life dilemmas that dentists are facing, as reflected in the kinds of calls coming in to the hotline” notes Dr. Enos. “The data might prompt a move to make a section of the ADA Code clearer, or it might suggest an opportunity for an informational resource that would make it easier to address a specific issue.”

“If CEBJA starts to see some trends, it can respond accordingly. CEBJA can refine the ADA Code to be clearer if needed or generate more literature and materials for dentists if the hotline tracks trends in a certain direction.”

Members may access the hotline by calling the ADA. And all dentists are encouraged to familiarize themselves with ethics and professional standards by searching for ethics resources at ADA.org/ethicsconduct.

Executive Practice Management Certificate Program for Dentists — $500 Discount

The Executive Practice Management Program for Dentists offered by the University of Florida College of Dentistry is a comprehensive academic program that enhances your knowledge from “clinical dentist” to “business owner.” The thirteen-month program is designed to prepare dentists to become business owners and executive managers within their dental practices.

Participants attend monthly meetings in Orlando, FL, as well as utilize a supplemental online web course. Eligible program participants must be practicing, actively-licensed dentists, newly graduated dentists, or graduating dentists in dental school. ADA members enjoy a $500 discount when registering for the program.

To learn more about the program, or to apply, visit epmfordentists.com and remember to mention your ADA membership for a $500 discount!
“It Has to be Us” — The Value of Membership

ADA New Dentist News sat down with the current chair of the ADA New Dentist Committee to talk about the value of organized dentistry to new dentists — those ten years or less out of dental school.

ADA New Dentist News
Tell us a little bit about who you are as a new dentist?
Dr. Chris Salierno
Sure. I earned my D.D.S. in 2005 and completed my G.P.R. in 2006. I worked as an associate, knowing that one day I wanted to be a practice owner. In fact the first year that I served on the ADA New Dentist Committee was the year we broke ground on my practice. I kept hearing about how new dentists are the future of the profession and I wondered are the patients going to show up? Do they know I’m the future of dentistry? (laughs.)

ADA New Dentist News
So the economic downturn was already in full swing?
Dr. Chris Salierno
Yes. You know this is a complex time for dentistry in general. It’s a complicated business environment, there’s a tough economy, but even when everything is ducky, being a new dentist is challenging. It’s tough to figure out your next step. I remember in school there were some general business courses but there was nothing that prepared us for, say, being an employee and wondering is this ethical, what I’m being asked to do here? And not just ethics, there were countless situations where I asked, Wait a minute, am I the only one with this feeling?
Right away I saw one advantage to being a member of the ADA. I had access to peers who were having similar experiences and I didn’t have to reinvent the wheel, I just had to talk to them. And there were seasoned dentists I could connect with—having another dentist who can vouch for you, that’s incredibly valuable.

ADA New Dentist News
That’s about as concrete as it gets, having someone help you out with a job.
Dr. Chris Salierno
Exactly. I’ve made this investment in my career, in time and money, so I’m interested in every opportunity to enhance my professional success.

And it’s not just the intangible stuff, like networking. For example, I’m in New York State and they publish a guide for someone setting up a practice. Things I had no idea about, like getting a certificate for my X-ray machine. Owning a practice means hundreds of decisions, and to have all that consolidated into a single place was so helpful. That’s just one example of all the resources that are available.

ADA New Dentist News
Let’s move the perspective out from individuals to the profession as a whole. What is the role of ADA membership when it comes to dentistry?
Dr. Chris Salierno
Earlier I was saying that this is a complex time for dentistry. And if we want to defend our patients, if we want to defend the way we practice then we can’t rely on big business. We can’t rely on politicians. It has to be us. The ADA is the #1 organization serving dentists. There are dentists who have been fighting for and protecting the profession for decades. And for that tradition to continue it’s up to us to step up by being members.

The ADA isn’t some ivory tower off in the distance, it’s us! So if you have a challenge, if there’s something that is bothering you, if there is an injustice that you see it’s your responsibility to bring that to the attention of your fellow dentists. Maybe you aren’t the person who storms Capitol Hill, maybe you are the person who informs the person who does.

There’s very little that people can’t accomplish when they work together. And there’s very little that one person can accomplish by sitting alone, griping. If you’re going to gripe, at least gripe to a group. If you’re just talking to yourself no one is going to hear you!

PatientSmart Patient Education Materials
PatientSmart is a library of concise ADA patient education information accessible right from your practice’s website when you add an easy-to-install button on your homepage.

Patients can view videos, read text, and see images drawn from the ADA’s best-selling brochures. PatientSmart can e-mail content to patients before or after an office visit to follow up on information you discussed or make recommendations on further readings. As an added bonus your practice contact information appears on each page!

For complete product features and setup details, visit ADA.org/patientsmart. For a limited time, enjoy 20% off PatientSmart with promo code 13109. Shop online at adacatalog.org or call 800.947.4746 to speak with a member service associate between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. CST. This offer ends April 15, 2013.

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Registration is Open for 27th New Dentist Conference

For Dr. Shamik Vakil, who earned his D.D.S. in 2008 and went on to complete a residency in pediatric dentistry in 2010, the annual New Dentist Conference is a highlight of his summer calendar.

“Professionally, it’s valuable because I always come away more informed, explains Dr. Vakil who represents the sixteenth district on the ADA New Dentist Committee. “And personally, I find it energizing to be with so many of my peers from across the country.”

The 27th New Dentist Conference takes place in Denver, CO this July 18-20 at the Four Seasons hotel. Registration is open at ADA.org/newdentistconf. The three-day conference includes sessions on clinical topics as well as practice management, and effective communication. Lunches and special events are included and conference attendees enjoy a discount when booking rooms at the host hotel.

The leadership programming gets underway Thursday, July 18 with presentations on leadership skills, developing new dentist programming throughout the tripartite, and social media. On Thursday afternoon, the popular Hot Topics session returns in a new roundtable format, with members of both the ADA New Dentist Committee and the Board of Trustees taking your questions. Thursday’s schedule is capped off with a complimentary cocktail reception poolside on the rooftop of the Four Seasons with members of both the ADA New Dentist Committee and Board of Trustees.

Friday and Saturday are both filled with continuing education courses—the three day conference offers up to 15 hours of CE credit. Topics include implant dentistry, financial management, coaching the dental team, and effective case presentation.

Friday night brings Major League excitement to an event at Coors Field. The Friday night event is complimentary for conference attendees; a limited number of tickets are available for guests of all ages for $75 per person.

Saturday’s schedule holds another full day of CE and networking. The day also includes an awards luncheon recognizing outstanding commitment to organized dentistry. Attire for the conference, including all courses, programing, meals and entertainment is business casual.

Advance registration for the conference is $375 for dentist members. Not a member? Visit ADA.org/join. Advance registration is $275 for ADA Federal Dentist Service members, as well as for ADA student and graduate student members. Register before May 24, 2013 and be entered in the Early-Bird Registration Sweepstakes.

Visit ADA.org/newdentistconf to register for the conference, to find information on travel and hotel reservations, see the prizes that will be awarded to those participating in Early-Bird Registration, and to select the CE courses you want to attend. Questions? 312.440.2779 or newdentist@ada.org.