

**Address of the Incoming President  
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2023 ADA House of Delegates  
October 10, 2023**

Mr. Speaker, Colleagues, Fellow Leaders, and Distinguished Guests:

I am overwhelmed with gratitude for this incredible opportunity to work alongside you as the 160<sup>th</sup> president of the American Dental Association — the fifth woman in ADA history to lead this esteemed organization. It is truly an honor and a privilege.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank those who have encouraged and inspired me along this journey.

I would first like to thank my husband, Bryan. Without him, I would not have been a dentist or an ADA trustee. We celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at the Nevada House of Delegates on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and I appreciate his patience during times when I have been stressed. We have been blessed to support each other through the good and the tough times as true partners.

Thanks to my son, Captain David, my two granddaughters, Tatum and Analise, and Judy, David's wife and an amazing mom. Please stand.

Thanks to my campaign chair and your current CEBJA chair, Dr. Bruce Burton. Bruce has been my coach and my friend, who continues to counsel me and encourage me during tough times.

Thanks to Bracken Killpack, Washington State Dental Association's Executive Director, who was one of my biggest supporters to run for this office and who is the Chair of the new Membership Model Task Force you've heard about. Thanks to my Eleventh District with five states, who all came together like I have never seen before.

Thank you to President Dr. George Shepley for your amazing leadership, your honesty, wisdom, guidance, and friendship. You have led our Association through a year of transformation and reinvigoration!

Thank you to Past President Dr. Cesar Sabates, who brought love back into our Association and made all of us be "okay not to be okay."

We appreciate all our Past Presidents and the time and effort they have spent to lead our organization and make it THRIVE.

Thank you to Executive Director Dr. Raymond Cohlma, whose energy is unsurpassed and whose desire to explode the ADA into its true potential in the United States and worldwide is unmatched.

And thanks to so many of YOU for your encouragement and desire to make our profession stronger. We are stronger together!

People have asked me, "What drives you to continue to serve dentistry?" Several of you in this audience sent me notes to encourage me to run for ADA President-elect... so I stopped to reflect on what really makes me the happiest. And I realized...

I am the happiest when I am making a difference...

Helping someone else realize how amazing they are and...encouraging them to reach for their full potential...

Making a real difference for others...

And perhaps even playing a role in saving a life through listening, caring, and taking action.

Robin Williams, the legendary actor who took his own life, once said, "You never know when someone is silently hurting and what a difference a kind word or deed will make in a person's life."

Being in a room with all of you who feel the same way is exhilarating!

I am happiest when we all come together to get things done that really matter to our members, such as advocating for insurance reforms like helping to pass Question 2 in Massachusetts, creating a medical loss ratio for dental plans...and now watching 13 state dental societies file MLR legislation with more teeth...

In my speech last year, the three things I said we needed to improve were:

Personal caring connections...

Collaboration

And communication.

Brené Brown says ... That we are HARD WIRED to connect.

I have personally witnessed that genuine caring connections with others create a commitment...

We have the power to transform lives, not just through our clinical expertise...but through the connections we build as champions of oral health.

We have the power to connect dentists to their dreams through the support we bring to our new dentists as mentors.

And we have the power to connect our profession to its possibilities.

We are one community with infinite strength. When all our dental organizations come together...there is nothing we can't accomplish.

Our connection, collaboration, and communication—what I like to call our 3 C's—between our local components, our states, and ADA National will allow us to accomplish almost anything.

Maya Angelou once said: "If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded."

Before I enrolled in dental school at age 37, I was a teacher for 15 years—seven years in junior high and eight years teaching honors chemistry.

After losing two babies at age 24, I felt broken, so I pursued a running career. I ran 45 marathons with a best time of 2:42 in 10 years, averaging 107 miles a week. After a year of injuries, and only 3 months of training, I qualified for the first Women's Olympic Marathon Trials in 2:50:59, with only 17 seconds to spare, and completed two Ironmen Triathlons in 12 and a half hours at age 45 and 46.

My athletic career taught me that anything is possible with enough determination and hard work. I learned to get up each time I fell. This mentality carried me through both my personal and professional endeavors—because as we all know, dentistry and life can be tough!

My first 10K was in 58 minutes on 30 miles a week, and 3 years later, I ran the 10K in 35 minutes at less than a 6-minute pace, averaging over 100 miles a week. So, anything is indeed possible if we rip off our limits and remove the words "Can't" and "Impossible" from our vocabularies.

As a swim coach in high school, and later a track coach, and as a teacher, I also believed that keeping things simple was best.

In fact, I would simply say to my track athletes to stay left and get back here as fast as you can.

The same is true for getting important things done for our ADA members and our profession.

I would rather get three things accomplished than talk about doing 100 things.

Henry Ford once said, "You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do."

At age 36, I crashed in an Ironman and broke four ribs, which resulted in my husband Bryan going to the University of Washington Dental School and grabbing an application. He gave it to me and said, "I think you should apply. You would be good at this...and it might be safer than doing the Ironman."

I got in, but dental school was tough! I had a 10-year-old and a one- to two-hour commute from home. And during my third year, Bryan was called up out of the army reserves to serve in the Army in Desert Storm. We had 24 hours after the call before he was deployed.

During my first year of waxing class, I sat in between a classmate who had done lab work for his dad for 12 years and one who had done jewelry. Needless to say, my wax up looked like a piece of bubble gum compared to theirs.

I nearly quit that year. I felt like a failure, but Bryan and the dean of our dental school said...

"If you don't finish, so many patients will miss out on you making a difference in their lives."

This is why... I believe forging caring connections and bringing a personal touch to our new dentists is so important! I have lived the difference it can make in a life.

Often after winning a 10K or marathon race, the 2<sup>nd</sup> place runner would come up to me and say, "If I ran as many miles as you, I would have no trouble beating you." I would smile and say, "Then just do it."

As your ADA President, we will remove barriers and limits, and together, we will prove that with unity, hard work, and perseverance, there is nothing we cannot achieve together.

My next pillar is collaboration.

Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a group of committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it is one of the only things that ever has."

Malcolm Gladwell in his book “The Tipping Point” also said, “Changing one thing can change an epidemic.”

We have an epidemic of tooth decay in our children.

I would like to help the youngest among us one lunchbox at a time by improving oral health literacy through the Lessons in a Lunchbox initiative.

Dr. Winifred Booker, founder and CEO of the Children’s Oral Health Institute, created Lessons in a Lunchbox in 2008 and has educated 65,000 second and third graders with this program, helping to prevent tooth decay.

Although it's not an official ADA program, the ADA Board of Trustees decided to help expand this program this past June.

As part of these efforts, the ADA has committed \$75,000 to the Children’s Oral Health Institute and its Lessons in a Lunchbox program, helping to teach young students about brushing and oral health plus offering exposure to careers in dentistry.

The initial round of funding goes toward 10,000 lunch boxes to be distributed during National Children’s Health Month in February. To further amplify outreach efforts, the Children’s Oral Health Institute and the Lessons in a Lunchbox program had a presence at this year’s SmileCon, and earlier this week, the program was presented to second and third graders at Washington Shores Elementary School here in Orlando.

If you are interested in sponsoring a school, go to the Children’s Oral Health Institute website to take the one-hour CE course and learn how to sign up.

We are looking forward to subsequent ADA sponsorship going toward further activation in 2024.

To move the needle even more, I reached out to many of you directly by mail in August to help raise additional funds so we can order 10,000 more boxes. Thank you to these individuals who have responded to my letter with your donation. We’ve also recently received a donation from the Alliance of the ADA.

With your support, my goal is to distribute a total of 20,000 lunchboxes across the country.

What if together we could create a tipping point that could help reduce tooth decay in children?

What if we could use the information that results from Dr. Shepley’s Sugar Task Force to help make the public healthier? Thank you to Dr. Greg Chadwick, an ADA past

president and newly installed president of the FDI World Dental Federation, for shaping the FDI's efforts to produce a white paper on this important issue of sugar, nutrition, and oral health.

What if the ADA could foster global collaborations to reduce incidence of tooth decay worldwide?

It is initiatives like these that remind me of the Starfish story, where making one small change can lead to a ripple effect that can change the world. In the story, an old man notices a young boy picking up starfish and throwing them back in the ocean in an effort to save each one.

The old man goes up to the boy and says, "There are thousands of starfish on this beach. I am afraid your effort will not make a difference."

The boy bent down and picked up another starfish and threw it back in the ocean. Then he turned and smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one."

Imagine what a difference a lunchbox could make to a single child who started brushing. In fact, one of the children who got a lunchbox is now graduating from dental school and he wrote about his experience receiving the lunchbox on his dental school application.

I am passing out a few wrist bands that say you too can be a dentist, a hygienist, or an assistant. I made these wristbands to help encourage our youngest to think of dentistry. Please take one and make a personal connection with a young person you know.

If all our dental organizations, ASDA, our districts, and dental companies came together in collaboration by donating a small amount, we could have a historic opportunity to promote preventative care in our schools. We can help our public get one step closer to optimal health.

By participating in listening sessions with the work of our strategic forecasting action groups, we can address the needs of our members as one united voice tackling complex issues, such as creating "real" insurance, medical loss ratio legislation "with teeth" across the country, access to care, workforce issues, licensure portability, as well as student debt reform.

Together, with all the amazing people in this room and ideas from members and input from non-members, we can make real meaningful change happen!

Courage is fear holding on a little longer...

If you don't think little things can make a difference, try going to sleep with a mosquito in the room.

I want the ADA to be a big organization that feels...like a small organization—by spearheading more mentorship programs and study clubs so our members know “we have your back.”

We must empower all women dentists, who have unique issues and needs, and connect them with each other. We also have the opportunity to understand what we can do for them – whether they are members or prospective members. We must also inspire more women to get involved in leadership roles.

Soon, I'll be launching a Facebook group where ALL women dentists and dental students will be invited to join to build a closer community. Stay tuned – there is more to come.

We must welcome all dentists across ALL practice modalities, including private practice, DSO groups, public health, federal services, educators, and researchers—to encourage them to become leaders in the ADA and join the conversation to help our profession thrive. We are STRONGER TOGETHER.

As we continue to foster connections, we must remember to focus on listening before we focus on fixing.

We must also remember to lift while we climb.

When I traveled around the country, I asked members: “How did you become a leader? A majority said it was because someone asked them.

Please stand if you have been a dues-paying member for 50 years and remain standing... 40 years... 30 years... let's give these members a round of applause because they are the ones who built the ADA to be the strong organization it is today. We must encourage our new dentists who have invested many years and tens of thousands of dollars – and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars – to be trained in this profession to join and protect their investment.

With the stroke of a legislative pen—by someone who has never held a hand piece or given an injection to an 8-year-old—the freedoms you have now...to practice and deliver the treatment YOU CHOOSE with your patients...can change forever.

The ADA is the only organization BIG enough to advocate, protect, and promote our profession for our colleagues and communities.

What if this year we take that downward membership market share curve and reverse it?

You know first-hand the value you receive from your ADA membership. From the community and resources you've come to count on, the ADA provides the support you need to help achieve your goals.

I challenge EVERY member dentist to help colleagues and friends thrive by inviting them to join the ADA, as part of our brand-new membership recruitment initiative.

Beginning January 1 through August 31, 2024, for every five new members you recruit, you'll receive a chance to win our grand prize – a Hawaiian getaway for you and a guest!

And, for each new member you recruit, your name will be entered into a quarterly drawing where you will have a chance to win additional prizes.

The process is simple. Referring members will receive a qualifying entry each time their name is listed as the "referring member" on the new member's application.

There is no limit to the number of new members who can be recruited or entries in the drawing, so the sky is the limit!

In fact, if you recruit 25 new members, you will automatically win a quarterly prize!

All recruiters will be recognized at SmileCon 2024 in New Orleans. Top recruiters will receive additional recognition.

You'll hear more in the next couple of months, and until then remember that we all have a major opportunity ahead of us.

So, let's all come together and blow our membership numbers out of the water! Let's remove the words "Can't" and "Impossible" from our vocabularies and reverse that membership curve!

The work doesn't stop here. We ALSO need to communicate our story better.

On your seats, we have also placed a few fact sheets answering the question, "What has ADA done for me lately" to help you in your recruiting.

Through the ADA campaign "Together We Thrive, we emphasize how very important the Power of Three is, and how we are stronger together.



It highlights the ADA's invaluable contributions and the benefits of joining our professional family—from the benefits of licensure portability, wellness tools, and insurance advocacy, to FDA-recognized standards testing for the products used to keep you and your patients safe, student loan and tuition reform...and developing real dental insurance.

Caring for others and inviting them in...that is how we build community.

Remember Disney's dream started with a mouse.

Let's climb every mountain we are faced with.

Let's be the bridge to ACTION.

Problems become opportunities, and tragedies can become triumphs.

I want you to think of the story of the caterpillar who ends up in a cocoon and struggles for some time before it emerges as a beautiful butterfly.

If you poke a hole in the cocoon, the butterfly's wings do not develop...it is the struggle that makes the butterfly's wings large and strong.

Just as a butterfly is a symbol of transformation, freedom, and rebirth – so is the ADA.

While the ADA embraces all the challenges that come its way, I believe these challenges have created a reinvigoration and a reemergence of a beautiful and strong organization with amazing power to move into our future...

As a reinvigorated organization...As a new, beautiful beginning...

So, lets climb every mountain.

Let's stand united—it is amazing what you can accomplish when you don't know what you can't do.

Thank you all again for giving me this amazing opportunity to serve as the ADA's 160<sup>th</sup> President and to work with all of you and move the ADA into the future, together!

As Elvis Presley once sang... "A Little Less Conversation...A Little More Action..."

Thank you.