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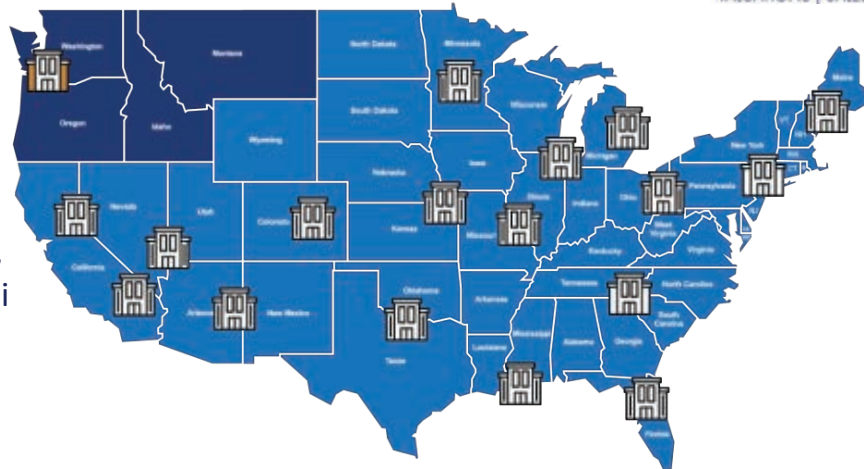
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- **EXPOSURE** Access to exclusive national advertising just for ADS Member Companies – adding to our extensive regional marketing mix.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEATURES




- 15 DENTISTS, HYGIENISTS URGED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OREGON WELLNESS PROGRAM**
- 18 BUILDING A DENTAL WORKFORCE THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE AND EDUCATION**
- 19 ODA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**
- 26 NURTURING WELLNESS: ASDA HOSTS WELLNESS LUNCH AT OHSU SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY**
- 27 SMILES IN ACTION: MDS AND OHSU SOD UNITE FOR 2026 GIVE KIDS A SMILE**
- 28 MARION POLK DENTAL SOCIETY HEARS FROM SALEM MAYOR JULIE HOY**
- 29 WCDS RECONNECTS: A PACKED HOUSE FOR EDUCATION AND CAMARADERIE**
- 30 2025 ODA ANNUAL REPORT**



DEPARTMENTS


- 5 GUEST EDITORIAL**
- 7 WELCOME NEW AND RETURNING ODA MEMBERS**
- 9 EVENTS AND EDUCATION**
- 11 BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
- 13 MEMBER BENEFIT OF THE MONTH**
- 14 BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**
- 34 CLASSIFIED ADS**
- 34 INDEX TO ADVERTISERS**

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Membership Matters is an official publication of the Oregon Dental Association in support of its core purpose to advance the dental profession and promote the highest standard of oral health and oral health care.

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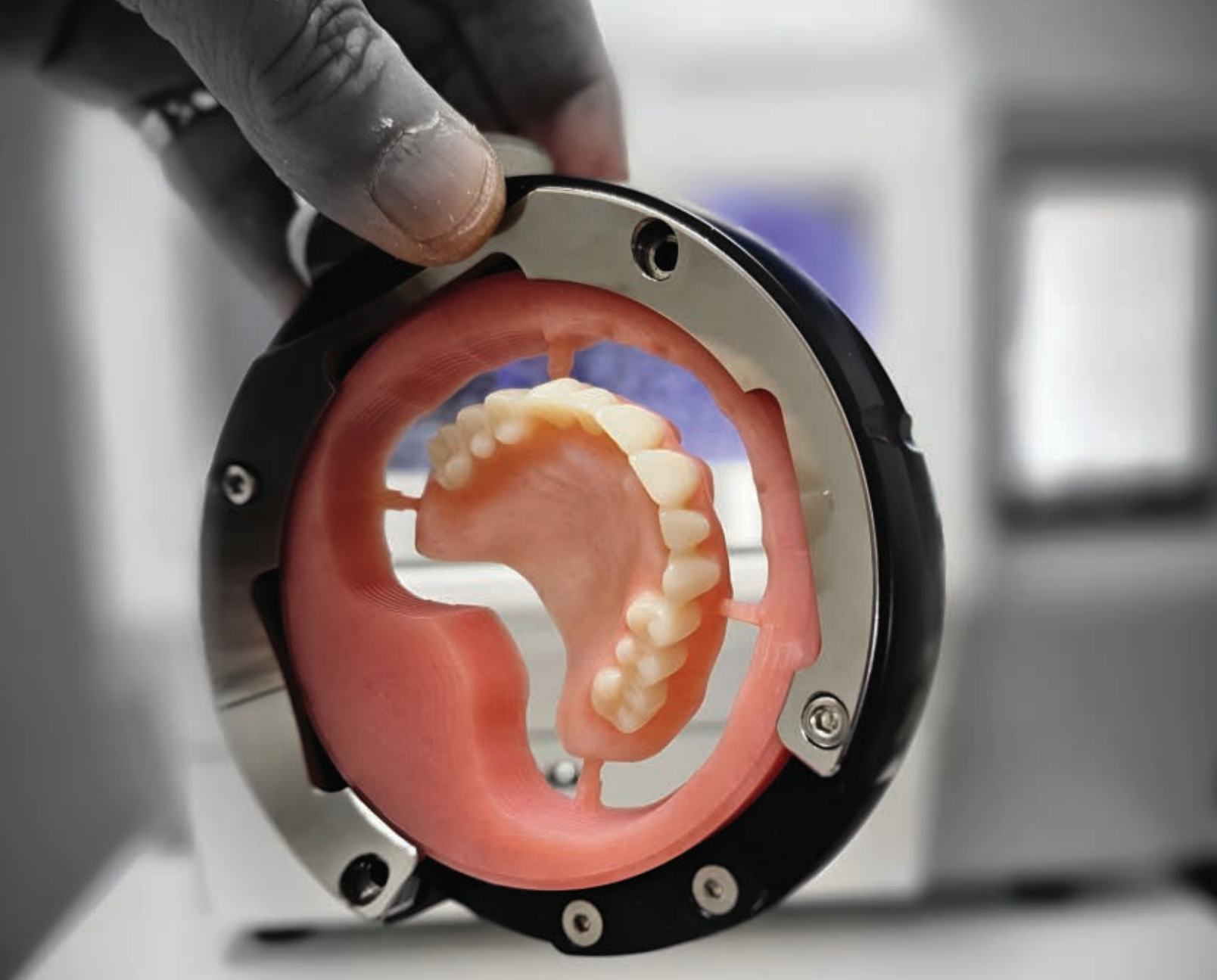
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Beyond Resilience: Protecting the Dentist Behind the Dentistry



By Dr. Julie Spaniel, DDS

Exciting news from your Editor – I am on maternity leave, and ODA leaders have stepped in to write some guest editorials while I'm bonding with our little boy. All members are welcome to submit guest editorials via email (aschoblaske@gmail.com).

We Don't Need to Be Told Dentistry Is Stressful

No dentist needs an article explaining that dentistry is hard. I feel it in my neck at the end of a long crown preparation. I feel it when the schedule collapses at 8:12 a.m. I feel it reviewing payroll after a slow month. I feel it when a valued team member gives notice again. I feel it when a patient cries, cancels, cannot afford care, or expects perfection from biology. And then I go home wanting to be fully present as a parent, partner, and friend often carrying the cognitive residue of the day with me.

This is not complaining. This is the profession.

Dentistry demands vigilance, precision, emotional regulation, and irreversible decisions in compressed time. Practice owners also carry business risk, staffing instability, regulatory oversight, and financial responsibility. Add the normal complexities of life, illness, aging parents, children, unexpected loss, and it is no surprise dentistry ranks among the most stressful professions.

We do not need awareness that stress exists. What we need is permission to address it before it accumulates.

The Myth We Quietly Practice

Most of us were trained to manage everything ourselves.

Adjust. Push through. Stay on schedule.

Resilience is not the problem. Dentistry requires resilience.

Isolation is.

When dentists struggle, we do it privately. We compartmentalize and minimize. By the time burnout is recognized, it may appear as irritability, fatigue, avoidance, pain, sleep disruption, or erosion of confidence.

Twenty years ago, I experienced that erosion. I was functioning externally but struggling internally. I believed I should handle it alone. Admitting difficulty felt like inadequacy, and I worried about judgment and credibility.

I could not have been more wrong.

I did not recover by pushing harder. I recovered because other people helped. Colleagues listened. Professionals provided guidance. Trusted individuals created space for honesty without judgment. Support did not diminish me; it stabilized me. Asking for help was not a failure of resilience, it was an application of it.

Yet the stigma persists. We speak easily about back pain and production metrics, less easily about anxiety, exhaustion, or depression. The silence is subtle but powerful.

Real Support Exists and It Is Built for Us

The Oregon Dental Association has invested in confidential, preventive support.

The Oregon Wellness Program provides confidential assistance for dentists and hygienists – not after a crisis, but before one. It connects colleagues to counseling, peer support, and resources for stress, burnout, mental health concerns,

substance use, or overwhelming life events. Participation is supportive, not punitive.

ODA Wellness Ambassadors are also available simply to talk – no reporting, no records – just another dental professional who understands practice realities.

Members also have access to the ADA's Mayo Clinic Well-Being Index, a brief validated self-assessment that often identifies strain earlier than we consciously acknowledge and directs users toward appropriate resources.

These programs are not for "someone else."

They are infrastructure for a sustainable career.

What Sustainability Actually Looks Like

We often measure success by production or growth. The truest metric is longevity, the ability to practice well and competently for decades.

- Sustainability requires awareness:
- Noticing persistent fatigue instead of normalizing it
 - Treating musculoskeletal pain early
 - Addressing financial anxiety with professional guidance
 - Talking with peers instead of withdrawing
 - Asking for help before confidence erodes

None of these actions lower our standards. They preserve them. We counsel patients that prevention improves outcomes and intervene early. The same principle applies to us.

Continued on page 34



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Welcome New and Returning ODA Members

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AND RETURNING MEMBERS! Please reach out to these members and welcome them into the ODA community.

Dimitri Aleksandrov, DMD
Multnomah Dental Society

Alexa Brightman, DMD
Clackamas County Dental Society

Amrita Chakraborty, DDS
Rogue Valley Dental Society

Subhashish Das, DDS
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Eastern Oregon Dental Society

David Krawski, DMD
Central Oregon Dental Society

Tanya McDonald, DMD
Southern Oregon Dental Society

Zaid Qaryaqs, DMD
Multnomah Dental Society

Lauren Smith, DMD
Mid-Columbia Dental Society

Tuan Tran, DMD
Washington County Dental Society

Anuoluwapo Williams, DDS
Central Oregon Dental Society

Annual Business MEETING

Continuing EDUCATION

Family Friendly SOCIAL EVENTS

Building Community CONNECTIONS

Save the date!

October 2-4, 2026
Sunriver Resort

ODA REGIONAL EVENT

"Every year the theme changes, but the quality remains the same!"

Barry Taylor, DMD, CAE
Executive Director, Oregon Dental Association

oregon dental ASSOCIATION

The poster features a central circular graphic with a space theme. It includes a space helmet with a colorful nebula inside, set against a starry background with constellations. The text is arranged around the graphic, with 'Save the date!' in a large, white, cursive font at the top. The event details 'October 2-4, 2026 Sunriver Resort' are in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The words 'ODA REGIONAL EVENT' are written in a white, bold, sans-serif font along the bottom curve of the circle. On the left side, there are four lines of text: 'Annual Business MEETING', 'Continuing EDUCATION', 'Family Friendly SOCIAL EVENTS', and 'Building Community CONNECTIONS', with 'MEETING', 'EDUCATION', 'SOCIAL EVENTS', and 'CONNECTIONS' in a larger, bold, teal font. At the bottom left is the Oregon Dental Association logo, and at the bottom right is a quote and the name of the Executive Director.

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Events & Education

Component CE Calendar

CONTINUING
EDUCATION

Calendar provided by Mehdi Salari, DMD

This calendar is current as of April 1, 2026

Please visit the host dental society website for the most up-to-date information.

Date	Dental Society	Course or Event Title	Speaker	CE	Location	More Information
04/23/2026	Multnomah	Annual Meeting	-	-	The Kennedy School	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
04/28/2026	Clackamas	Annual Meeting	-	-	Providence Willamette Fall Conference Center-Suture Clinic	Info/Register: www.clackamasdental.com
05/06/2026	Washington	Annual Meeting	-	-	TBD	Info/Register: www.washingtoncodental.org
05/09/2026	Coastal Cascades	Green Dentistry 2.0: Future Proofing Your Practice for a Sustainable Tomorrow	Brittany Cox, MA, RDH	2	Newport – Oregon Coast Aquarium	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
05/14/2026	-	Marion Polk Fluoride and Other Preventative Topical Agents: Looking at the Evidence from a Pediatric Dentist's Perspective	Dr. Amanda Day	-	1.5 Broadway Commons	Info/Register: www.marionpolkdental.org
05/21/2026	Central Oregon	Strategic Online Digital Marketing For Sustainable Practice Growth	Stew Barlett, MBA - WEO Media	2	Bend – Currents Restaurants Riverhouse	More info to come
05/28/2026	Coastal Cascades	Sleep Apnea: Time to Wake Up	Dr. Erin Elliott	2	Albany Golf and Event Center	Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
05/29/2026	Coastal Cascades	Sleep Apnea: Beyond the Basics	Dr. Erin Elliott	2	Eugene – Lane Community College	Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
06/9/2026	Coastal Cascades	Retiree Luncheon	-	-	Eugene – Roaring Rapids Pizza	Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
06/13/2026	Coastal Cascades	Meetup: Hiking and Nature Photography Outing	-	-	Blue River – Proxy Falls	Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
08/11/2026	Coastal Cascades	Arcade Meetup	-	-	Play Eugene	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
09/7/2026	-	Tri-County Fall Kick Off/ Tailgate Event	-	-	ODA Parking Lot	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
09/08/2026	Coastal Cascades	3D Printing	Max Thomas	2	Eugene – LLC	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
09/11/2026	Coastal Cascades	CE TBD	TBD	2	Corvallis Community Center/Webinar	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
09/19/2026	Coastal Cascades	Dental Office Manager Summit	Healthcare Compliance Associates	-	Camp Harlow – Springfield	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
09/24/2026	Central Oregon	TBD	TBD	2	Bend – Currents Restaurants Riverhouse	More info to come
10/10/2026	Coastal Cascades	Hiking and Nature Photography	-	-	Alesea Falls Trail	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS
10/15/2026	-	Tri-County Women in Dentistry Wine and Paint Night	TBD	-	-	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
10/16/2026	Coastal Cascades	Topic TBD	TBD	2	Eugene – LLC	Info/Register: www.bit.ly/CCDSEVENTS

Find this calendar online at www.oregondental.org. Click “Meetings & Events” > “Calendar of Events.”

Looking for additional ways to get CE? The American Dental Association has a large collection of webinars and on-demand video learning opportunities available, many of which are free to members. Visit adaceonline.org to catch up on the latest offerings on your own schedule. 🎧

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Supporting the Entire Dental Team: Why the ADA Well-Being Index Matters Now More Than Ever

IN RECENT YEARS, DENTISTRY HAS FACED an escalating mental health challenge, one that affects not only dentists, but hygienists, assistants, front-office staff, and students alike. Recognizing this reality, the American Dental Association (ADA) has taken a significant step forward by expanding free access to the Well-Being Index.

This expansion means that any dentist, specialist, team member, or dental student can now use the Well-Being Index at no cost using an access code, providing access to confidential, personalized wellness resources.

The ADA's decision to broaden access was informed by sobering trends. According to ADA reports, 82% of dentists have reported significant stress and career burnout, highlighting the urgent need for proactive mental health support across the profession.

Dentistry is a highly collaborative profession, and the well-being of each team member directly influences practice function and patient care.

By offering the Well-Being Index to all dental professionals and students, the ADA acknowledges a simple truth: everyone in dentistry deserves access to mental health support, not just those who hold a DDS or DMD. This expansion reflects a growing commitment to an inclusive culture of care and resilience.

Developed by the Mayo Clinic, the Well-Being Index is a validated, anonymous self-assessment tool designed to measure multiple

dimensions of well-being – including burnout, fatigue, depression, and anxiety – through just nine quick questions that take less than a minute to complete.

What sets the Well-Being Index apart is its emphasis on:

✓ **Complete Anonymity**

No identifiable data is shared with employers, institutions, or the ADA. Results are securely stored and de-identified.

✓ **Customized Resources**

After each assessment, users receive personalized local and national resources tailored to their specific risk areas.

✓ **Tracking Over Time**

Participants can reassess regularly and monitor changes through a personal dashboard.

✓ **Evidence-Based Insights**

The tool measures multiple dimensions of distress and well-being, offering a comprehensive picture of mental health.

Why Universal Access Benefits the Whole Profession

Dentistry is a team sport. The emotional resilience of front-desk staff, assistants, hygienists, students, and dentists is deeply interconnected. When one part of the team struggles, the effects can impact workplace culture, retention, and patient care.

By expanding the Well-Being Index, the ADA aims to:

- Reduce burnout across all roles
- Improve team dynamics and communication

How to get started:

www.oregondental.org/wellness



- Support early identification of mental health concerns
- Enhance overall practice wellness and patient care

This shift reflects a broader movement in healthcare toward recognizing mental health as a shared professional priority.

Building a Healthier Future for Dentistry

The ADA's expansion of the Well-Being Index marks a pivotal moment in how the profession approaches mental health. By offering free, confidential assessments and personalized resources to every dental professional and student, the ADA reinforces that well-being is essential to high-quality patient care and workforce stability.

Whether you are a dentist, hygienist, assistant, or student, this resource is designed to support you.

Dentistry is at its best when its people are healthy, supported, and empowered. The Well-Being Index is one simple, evidence-based tool very important for helping move the profession closer to that goal – one assessment at a time. ●

Board of Trustees January 2026 Meeting Highlights

THE BOARD VOTED IN FAVOR OF WITHDRAWING money from the Board Designated Fund to hire a third party to administer a membership survey that will be sent to members and non-members.

The Board approved Dr. Andrea Beltzner to the Dental Foundation of Oregon board.

The ODA's Tom Tucker Humanitarian Award was discussed; the 2026 recipient will be Dr. Kurt Ferre. 🗣️

Moda Holdings Group, Inc. Board of Directors — Call for Applicants

With a broad array of companies under its corporate umbrella, Moda is committed to attracting candidates to serve on the Organization's Boards of Directors who represent excellence in both the practice of dentistry and in its diverse business ventures. Review the full job description at **<https://bit.ly/ModaBoardODA>**

The call for applicants is open for three positions on the Moda board for a term of 4 years. The incumbents in these positions are running for re-election.

Interested in serving on the Moda/ODA Board? Submit a letter of interest, CV/Resume, and 3-5 references (no family and one non-dental) to **btaylor@oregondental.org** by July 1st, 2026.

Dentists, Hygienists Urged to Take Advantage of Oregon Wellness Program

WELLNESS

By Melody Finnemore

THE OREGON WELLNESS

PROGRAM, CREATED IN 2018, was expanded in 2024 to include Oregon dentists and dental hygienists. It provides three one-hour sessions of mental health counseling that are free, confidential, and led by trauma-informed providers. However, this has been reduced from six sessions due to a lack of funding.

Eden Bainter, managing director of The Foundation for Medical Excellence, noted that the OWP is independent, so information is not included in clients' medical records. Providers bill the OWP directly, so clients do not have to be involved in that process. There is no paper trail or reporting to insurance or the Oregon Board of Dentistry.

The OWP is also a self-referral service so clients can find a provider who is a good fit on OWP's website, contact them directly for an appointment, and are guaranteed to hear back from them within three business days.

"That's pretty amazing that all they have to do is get in touch with someone and they can see them in pretty short order," she said, adding mental health appointments outside of the OWP can often take weeks or months to become available.

Bainter said the OWP's mental health team has experience working in health care systems and with health care professionals.

"They approach it with that lens and they know what it's like to be a health care professional, so they are going to offer appropriate advice and that can be more impactful," she said. "I've heard a lot of clients say they've talked to someone before who said, 'Well, it sounds like you need to work less or relax more at work,' and they think, 'It's not that simple.' Our team understands that."

Mandi Hudson, DO, president of the Oregon Wellness Program Executive Committee, added to that, noting that, first and foremost, the OWP exists to serve.

"As health care providers, we all face unique challenges and our mental health professionals understand those challenges. The pressures, whether those relate to running a business, serving difficult patients, balancing work and home life, being in student debt, or a host of others," said Dr. Hudson, assistant professor of behavioral medicine and psychiatry, COMP-Northwest & COMP Western University of Health Sciences.

"Many people know that it can take months to get in with a mental health professional for therapy or counseling, and even when you do, it's hard to know if that professional will really understand what it's like to be in the medical field," she said.

That understanding includes some of the stigmas oral health providers have traditionally faced when it comes to seeking help for mental and behavioral health challenges. In addition to the fear of retribution from licensing boards, many worry about the loss of patients and employment opportunities as well as irreparable damage to their reputation and career.

In addition to in-person appointments, the OWP offers telehealth appointments as an option for people who live in areas where there are not a lot of mental health resources.

ODA members can also log into their ADA account and take a Well-Being Index developed by the Mayo Clinic that is completely free. This is a quick self-assessment tool that can be taken several times a year to help people understand where they are thriving and which areas they can continue to improve in their physical and mental health.



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Bainter emphasized that the OWP is available to hygienists as well as dentists and encouraged them to take advantage of its services and resources.

Oregon Recognized for Language Changes to Licensure Applications

The Oregon Board of Dentistry was recently recognized by the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation as a Well-being First Champion by All In: Well-being First for Healthcare for making changes to its licensing applications so that they are free from overly broad and invasive mental health questions.

The ODA applauded the recognition, which comes with a certificate and a Well-being First Champion badge, reminding oral health care workers they can be assured that the OBD remains committed to their mental health.

The language changes were a result of nearly 18 months of advocacy efforts to remove stigmatizing questions related to mental health. On Dec. 13, 2024, the OBD voted to remove “have you ever” questions related to receiving counseling, therapy, or treatment for mental health issues, including substance misuse, from initial and renewal licensure applications.

The ODA led the advocacy efforts for licensure reform in collaboration with the Oregon Dental Hygienists’ Association, Permanente Dental Associates, Willamette Dental Group, Gentle Dental, Delta Dental of Oregon, and Capitol Dental. Julie Spaniel, DDS, ODA trustee, ADA wellness ambassador and member of the ADA Dental Team Wellness Advisory Committee, ODA Executive Director Barry Taylor, DMD, and ODA Director of Government Affairs Brett Hamilton, brought the issue before the OBD in person to request that the questions be changed to align with language used by the Oregon Medical Board.



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The OBD initially hesitated to make the changes, Dr. Spaniel said, and the matter was referred in spring 2024 to a committee for further review. Significant progress was achieved by that fall with the formation of a coalition facilitated by Hamilton. The coalition, which represented a majority of the state’s dentists, submitted a letter to the board strongly supporting licensure reform. Around the same time, dentists serving on the board spoke in favor of the changes, which the OBD then passed in December.

“The new licensure questions have significantly changed the landscape. Dentists struggling with mental health or substance use challenges can now seek treatment without fear of stigma or lasting repercussions,” Dr. Spaniel said. “This reform marks a significant step forward in reducing stigma and fostering a culture where seeking help is both encouraged and supported. The ODA remains committed to ensuring its members have access to the resources they need to thrive professionally and personally.”

OWP’s Mission Hits Personal Note for President Dr. Hudson

An annual report required as part of an agreement between The Foundation for Medical Excellence and the Oregon Board of Dentistry was presented to the OBD in late January and reported on OWP activities for 2025.

Client demographic charts in the annual report show that 100 percent of the clients who utilized the OWP last year were women. Sixty-seven percent of its clients were ages 36-50 and 33 percent were 20-35 years old.

As the OWP begins its eighth year of serving medical professionals, Dr. Hudson said she chose to serve on its Executive Committee because she wants to see her colleagues thrive in their professions and “not just hold on for dear life trying to survive.”

“I think, with the right professional supports, this is absolutely possible and the OWP is one, very high-quality type of that support. Being a medical provider is tough. We see and deal with things that many people won’t in addition to taking on huge responsibilities, often literally life and death, and medical providers, dentists included, deserve easy, quick access to mental health care. Without it, we will lose medical professionals and that is not something our state can afford.

“This is also personal for me. I have lost colleagues to suicide,” Dr. Hudson said, noting dentists and physicians have higher suicide rates than same-aged peers. “By offering immediate access to care, we have an opportunity to save lives.” ●

For more information about the Oregon Wellness Program, please call 541-242-2805 or visit OregonWellnessProgram.org.

EXCLUSIVE WELLNESS RESOURCES FOR ADA MEMBERS AND ASDA/ADA STUDENT MEMBERS



Find programs and resources to support your mental, emotional and physical well-being at [ADA.org/Wellness](https://ada.org/Wellness).



Well-Being Index (WBI) [ADA.org/WellBeingIndex](https://ada.org/WellBeingIndex)

Your health matters. All dentists, dental students and dental team members have free access to the Dental Well-Being Index (WBI), a validated, anonymous risk assessment tool invented and provided by the Mayo Clinic. First, set up your WBI account. Then in just one minute, you'll have access to a personalized dashboard and resources, allowing you to track your well-being over time. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



State Well-Being Program Directory *(updated in 2025)* [ADA.org/WellnessDirectory](https://ada.org/WellnessDirectory)

Looking for help and guidance? Support may be closer than you think. This directory links you to local resources, state dental society contacts, ADA Wellness Ambassadors and the 28 Federation of State Physician Health Programs that provide a therapeutic alternative to discipline for dentists, connecting you to assistance closer to home. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



ADA Ergonomic Stretches [ADA.org/Stretch](https://ada.org/Stretch)

Better ergonomics, stretching, and exercise can help dental teams build long, healthy careers. Download the ADA Ergonomic Stretches infographic with 25 quick stretches or access the ADA Member App for more resources to keep you and your dental team healthy. The downloadable ergonomic stretches are available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members. *The ADA Member App is available to ADA members and ASDA/ADA student members.*



After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit [ADA.org/Postvention](https://ada.org/Postvention)

Developed in 2023 by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the ADA, the *After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit* provides guidance for dental organizations responding to an unexpected suicide death. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a crisis, please text or dial 988 to be connected to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This service is free and confidential and is provided by a national network of more than 200 crisis centers supported by local and state sources as well as the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For a medical emergency dial 911.

Building a Dental Workforce Through Community Service and Education

Tooth Taxi Hosts Dental Students for Give Kids a Smile

JANDI, 9, HAS A TOOTH THAT “REALLY HURTS” when she bites down on hard food.

“You have a small cavity on your baby tooth that is causing the pain,” fourth-year OHSU School of Dentistry student **Jonathan Nguyen** tells Jandi and her mother, who are without dental insurance, and are visiting the Tooth Taxi when it’s parked at Powell Butte Elementary for Give Kids a Smile day in February.

Adds Nguyen: “I know it’s uncomfortable now, but when the new tooth comes all the way in soon, the baby tooth will come loose and not be a problem anymore.”

Nguyen, who graduates in May, and will pursue a general practice residency at OHSU, is grateful for the experience on the Tooth Taxi working with young people. He is one of several dozen third- and fourth-year dental students who volunteered on the Tooth Taxi for Give Kids a Smile, a community service event that offers access to critical dental care for children in need.

“Providing opportunities for dental students to care for populations in need outside of dental school is part of the strategic plan for The Dental Foundation of Oregon,” said **Barry Taylor**, DMD, CAE. “As the state’s dental workforce continues to gray, it is very important to support bright students with hands-on community experiences that get them ready to step right in and replace the dentists who are aging out.”

Beginning July 1, fourth-year dental students at OHSU will be able to elect the Tooth Taxi as a one-week community rotation, said Taylor. OHSU dental students are required to complete a total of nine weeks of community rotations to graduate; many go over the required amount.

“It’s no secret that rural areas of Oregon face severe shortages in access to dental care,” said Taylor. “If we can help introduce students to communities that they don’t always see when in clinic, while they are on the Tooth Taxi, caring for important demographics that



Fourth-year dental student Jonathan Nguyen and Portlander Jandi give a thumbs up during Give Kids a Smile day in February on the Tooth Taxi, as part of National Children’s Dental Health month.

build healthier communities, those experiences may get them interested in pockets of Oregon with a great need to access, and ultimately they may make a decision to locate there after graduation.” 🌐

Dentists: Want to Share your Services with Health-Conscious Folks?

We have tabling, raffle, and sponsorship opportunities for dental professionals who want to provide information about their services to health-conscious Portlanders! On Sunday, Oct. 18, The Dental Foundation of Oregon is coordinating a fundraising run and walk at Rock Creek Country Club, which is nestled within a residential neighborhood near Hillsboro and Beaverton, just west of the West Hills. Besides a 1K race for children 11 and under, a 5K run, and a 5K walk, attendees of all ages will also have the opportunity to enter a putting contest and have access to the driving range for a fun and family-oriented morning the weekend before Halloween. Looking for new clients and want to offer a free cleaning? Hoping to engage with new audiences seeking dental expertise in your area? Participating could be right for you! All proceeds benefit the Tooth Taxi. Contact Sydney for more information, sydney@dentalfoundationoforegon.org.





ODA Leadership Academy

THE ODA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY, offered through the Oregon Dental Association, is designed for dentists who are ready to elevate their impact and lead with confidence.

This year-long program (January–December) guides participants through a personalized journey of professional growth, leadership development, and meaningful engagement within organized dentistry. Think of it as a backstage pass to ODA, providing firsthand insight into advocacy, governance,

and the strategic initiatives shaping the future of dentistry in Oregon.

Participants complete a minimum of five immersive experiences throughout the year. Four core experiences are predetermined to ensure a strong foundation in leadership and association involvement. The remaining experiences are selected by each participant based on their individual interests, whether that's component leadership, public policy, membership engagement, or other areas of focus.

The result? A customized leadership pathway that delivers growth where it matters most.

If you're ready to expand your influence, strengthen your leadership skills, and play a more active role in shaping the profession, we invite you to take the next step.

Interested in joining the 2027 ODA Leadership Academy cohort or learning more?

Contact Melissa Juenger at mjuenger@oregondental.org for details and application information.

2026 ODA Leadership Academy Participant Profiles



**Ashish Bhandari, DMD –
Clackamas County
Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

At our fall kickoff, I learned that this year's academy is full of professionals from diverse backgrounds, from all corners of the country and various stages in their careers. That is very exciting for me, and I look forward to getting to know them. I am also excited to broaden

my knowledge on present and future endeavors of ODA and gain insights on how I can contribute in a meaningful way.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

A true leader to me is someone who has made the most mistakes in the room, has gained insights from those failures, who is not afraid to admit when they are wrong, is kind and respectful to all, leads by example, and consistently sets standards.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My academic advisor in dental school, Dr. Jack Marincel, has been very influential in my life. He taught me some valuable lessons that I apply every day, personally and

professionally. First, doing the right thing is always harder than cutting corners. He also taught me not to be afraid to fail. It is because of him that I always find myself constantly at the cutting edge of literature and technology, with intention of providing the best care that I can possibly provide.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate that dentistry gives us so much flexibility. We can tailor our careers to practice the subset of dentistry we most enjoy. We get the luxury of picking where we want to practice and take control of the days/hours to preserve the work-life balance. We get to choose to be a business owner, or an associate, or work for a group practice. Not very many professions offer this many choices!



**Corey Buring, DDS –
Multnomah Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I'm excited to learn how best to lead my team, but also how to be a better father, husband, and overall person.

I'm also excited to network and meet new like-minded professionals.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

I think guiding those around you towards either a common team goal or aiding someone with a personal goal is the true role of a leader. I believe this is done through courage, accountability, and confidence with humility.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

Dr. Susan Smith has been my professional mentor since I was in

high school. I was able to shadow her, which cemented my desire to become a dentist. She was also my first mentor out of residency and taught me so much about not only clinical dentistry, but also how to lead a team and communicate effectively with patients.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate being able to work with my hands and combining artistry with engineering and science. We also get the opportunity to help people of all different backgrounds, which is rare outside of healthcare.



**Todd Carris, DMD –
Multnomah Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I am excited to further develop my leadership skills by learning and collaborating with fellow colleagues.

The true role of a leader is to bring out the best in others to achieve a goal or purpose.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

Dr. John Zeleznock, aka "Z," was an oral surgeon at my General Practice Residency program in York, Pennsylvania. He had a contagious, positive energy that made work and learning fun. By the end of the GPR, I was the proud recipient of the Golden Forceps Award for excellence in oral surgery. It was a handcrafted award that was made by no one other than Z himself. He taught me the importance of recognizing individual contributions and celebrating milestones no matter

how big or small, all while keeping a sense of humor along the way!

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

Dentistry gives me the unique opportunity to work with my hands while making a meaningful impact on how patients see themselves. Many patients come in afraid, sometimes carrying years of anxiety about dental care. I enjoy creating a safe, calm environment where they can lower their defenses and genuinely feel cared for. There's nothing more rewarding than having a patient thrilled with their appearance after years of deteriorating dentition. Changing someone's perception of dentistry is just as meaningful as improving their smile.



**Geoffrey Clive, DDS –
Clackamas County
Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I wouldn't describe myself as being excited to be part of the leadership academy. I would say that I'm cautiously optimistic that I may acquire some skills or connections that may help me in running my office and being an effective advocate for

improved OHP endodontic coverage in the state.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

Provide vision, motivation, supervision, and correction to a group.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life

and what have you learned from him/her?

My endodontic residency director, Dr. Kenneth Frick, was a great mentor for me in my development into a specialist. He had high standards of

treatment and balanced friendship with his residents, providing corrections and standardized evaluations of our performance. He had a positive outlook on what we could become.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I like the opportunity it can provide to problem solve. As an endodontist, I spend half my time solving problems. The other half is spent creating them.



Kyahn Daraee, DMD – Washington County Dental Society

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

Getting to meet dentists from around the state who are also interested in organized dentistry and striving to make a difference in the world of dentistry, whether it is local or beyond. I am also interested in learning all the different aspects

of the ODA and where I feel I can contribute.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

Keeping everyone working toward one common goal. Even great people and great groups need direction, and I think a leader makes sure those people have every opportunity to grow and excel.

embodies it. He is genuinely a friend and a compassionate listener with all of his patients. You would think every one of his patients was a childhood friend. He is also like that every time we go somewhere out of the office. He is just the type of person that is friendly with everyone and it is a daily reminder that simply being nice goes a long way.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I love being able to be a provider for entire families and be a part of their lives. I always wanted to do something in the health care field, but I never wanted to be in a field where I would see people once, then never see them again. The continuity of care we get to have in dentistry is one of the many aspects I appreciate, and it is definitely one of the most fulfilling.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My friend, and owner of the practice I work at, Sam Mattson. One of my dental school professors once gave me a piece of advice and that was to never be a jerk (he may have used a different word, but we have cleaned it up) and Dr. Mattson truly



Ian Dickinson, DDS – Multnomah Dental Society

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I'm looking forward to seeing the inner workings of the ODA and absorbing as much experience and

advice as I can from the very talented and hardworking leaders that make this organization run!

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

The true role of a leader is to facilitate a group working together as an organization and helping them run smoothly. If a truly great leader is doing a great job, you won't even know it. Everything just works.

Dr. Ned Nix, an oral surgeon in San Jose, CA, was instrumental in my dental journey. I probably would not be a dentist without him. He taught me to always look for the silver lining if things don't go my way and to make the best of what I've got.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

That I get to heal sick people. That's why I got into this profession, and that's my purpose here. But as a distant second, I love working with all the fun little tools and instruments to solve the many problems that come up while restoring teeth. Keeps things interesting!

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?



**Natalie Hardin, DMD –
Clackamas County
Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

The ODA Leadership Academy is an exciting opportunity for me to grow as a leader while building on my experience in dentistry. I'm eager to develop new skills and connect with other passionate dentists. My goal is to bring what I learn back to my practice and community here in Molalla. If the skills I gain also help me become a better mother, grandmother, and friend, then that is just an additional bonus! I see leadership not just as a professional

role, but as a way of showing up more intentionally in every area of my life.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

I believe the true role of a leader is to empower others. As a newer graduate stepping into leadership through the CCDS, I've become especially aware of how meaningful it is when someone creates a clear vision and provides tools, encouragement, and space for others to grow. Leadership isn't just about making decisions, but about building trust, helping people recognize their strengths, and fostering a shared sense of purpose within a team.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My primary mentor has been my employer, Dr. Olesya Salathe, owner of The Dentist off Main and Salathe Dental. She is a past president of the CCDS, a trustee for the ODA, and a member of the Oregon Board

of Dentistry. A pioneer in digital dentistry, she has taught me to confidently integrate state-of-the-art technology to enhance patient care. When I joined her practice in 2021, it was immediately clear that she is an exceptional leader who invests deeply in her team, helping each person find purpose in their work, and fostering a positive, purpose-driven culture. From her, I've learned the value of listening well, adapting thoughtfully, and staying curious every day.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate the blend of science, healthcare, and artistry that dentistry offers. Each day, I have the opportunity to solve problems with my hands while building trust and meaningful relationships with my patients. I especially value helping apprehensive patients have a positive experience and begin to feel confident in their smile again. The balance of clinical care and personal connection is what keeps me engaged and fulfilled.



**Maragret Klein, DDS –
Multnomah County
Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I am most excited about participating in organized dentistry with other emerging leaders!

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

A leader can have so many roles, and there are so many types of leaders. The role of the leader depends on the context in which they are leading. In general, though, I think that the role of the leader is to facilitate the success of the team.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My colleague Chuck Row shares knowledge and experience with me daily; we frequently discuss treatment planning and clinical techniques, and review radiographs together. Beyond teaching me dentistry with respect to specific cases, he has taught me that it will always be cool to strive to do the right thing.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I find gratitude for being able to work to restore another human being's dignity through dentistry.



**Michael Reynolds, DMD –
Central Oregon
Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

Professional development, gaining leadership skills, and networking

with experienced leaders in our community.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

The true role of a leader is to guide team members to success by example and to inspire members of their team to become the best, most genuine versions of themselves for the most optimal outcomes.

strength, humor, empathy, and honestly too many traits to count, are all things I hope I can model and reflect as I continually learn from her every day.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate the human interactions in the profession of dentistry the most. It was not what I expected when I began in this field, but while the technical side of dentistry becomes routine throughout repetition, the human interaction becomes the most memorable and rewarding.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My wife has been the most influential person in my life. Her



**Elizabeth Sasse, DDS –
Coastal Cascades
Dentist Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I am excited for the opportunity to grow my leadership skills and learn more about how the ODA functions for Oregon dentists.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

I believe the true role of a leader is to inspire, educate, and affect change through shared goals and accountability.

My father, Frank Sasse, is a retired physician and educator. He modeled for me how to be a caring provider, how to commit to using evidence-based knowledge in practice, and how to stand up for myself and my patients even when it is uncomfortable.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate most that we have the privilege and responsibility to touch people's lives and improve them. Being a force for good in the world is an honor that few can take part in.

Who has been a primary mentor/influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?



**Mackenzie Sautter, DDS –
Multnomah Dental Society**

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I am excited to get to know my community and learn more skills on being a better leader.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

I think the true role of a leader is to set an example for the team.

and what have you learned from him/her?

My program director, Dr. Engelstad, has taught me to not only think ahead, but to constantly reflect back on my experiences.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

I appreciate being able to help patients when they are in pain and to make a meaningful change in their life.



Bryan Schofield, DMD – Clackamas County Dental Society

What most excites you about being part of the 2026 ODA Leadership Academy?

I'm excited to go through the Leadership Academy with a cohort of individuals with similar goals and varied backgrounds. I find learning new content and skills interesting, but what I find most exciting about group training is meeting and learning from

other participants. Using our own individual lived experiences to aid each other in understanding lessons that may apply to both past and future situations.

What do you think is the true role of a leader?

Providing support and guidance for a cause, with the goal of enabling it to become the best it can be.

Who has been a primary mentor/ influential person in your life and what have you learned from him/her?

My parents have been the most influential people in my life, both on a personal and professional level. Both trained as dental professionals and they have enjoyed their careers immensely, to the point I'm not sure if they are ever going to fully

retire. They taught me that working can be a passion and not a chore. They taught me the importance of community and supporting those around you. They have selflessly given their time, resources, and skills to help others, yet they have shown me how to enjoy every day and live life to the fullest.

What do you most appreciate about the profession of dentistry?

The autonomy. Dentistry is a field where you can truly sculpt the career you desire. There are just so many options on how to utilize our training, such as working location/ environment, patient base, scope of practice, public vs private, ownership vs employment. It keeps coming to work fun knowing that there are different options out there and that the field is ever-evolving. 🌍

oregon dental CONFERENCE

A NEW ROADMAP FOR ODC

WE'RE ON THE MOVE TO MARCH!

ODC is moving to March! Join us in May 2027 before we settle into our new dates in 2028, which align with the Oregon Board of Dentistry licensure renewal deadline.

2027	2028	2029
MAY 13-15, 2027	MARCH 9-11, 2028*	MARCH 8-10, 2029*

*Dates are tentative and being released for planning purposes. Please note they may adjust slightly.

Thank You, ODC Sponsors!

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an event for the
Entire Dental Team

Nurturing Wellness: ASDA Hosts Wellness Lunch at OHSU School of Dentistry

OHSU

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, THE OHSU SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY buzzed with a refreshing sense of calm and community as students gathered for a Wellness Lunch hosted by the American Student Dental Association (ASDA). Designed as a moment of pause in the midst of a demanding academic season, the luncheon invited dental students to enjoy a meal together, reconnect with themselves, and reflect on the multidimensional nature of wellness that sustains them through years of rigorous training.

The event intentionally set a peaceful tone from the moment students stepped inside. Soft, serene music filled the room; an audible reminder that wellness often begins with simply slowing down. With plates full and conversations flowing, students settled in for an interactive discussion centered around the many pillars of wellness that are essential for thriving both personally and professionally.

ASDA leaders guided an open dialogue exploring areas such as emotional, physical, social, financial, and intellectual wellness; domains that are especially relevant within the dental education environment. Students shared ways they find wellness within their day or week. Students know

how easily one area of wellness can overshadow another when deadlines and clinical responsibilities intensify. Yet the luncheon created space to acknowledge that true balance emerges when all the pillars are recognized and supported.

To enrich the conversation, the Oregon Dental Association (ODA) joined the luncheon as special guests. Melissa Juenger, ODA's Director of Membership & Communications, who is well-known among OHSU dental students for her active involvement in Lunch & Learns and the school's Mentor Pod program, engaged with attendees throughout the event. Alongside her, Heather Langdon, the ODA's Membership & Wellness Coordinator and a certified yoga instructor offered an encouraging presence as students explored the many facets of wellness.

As students voiced ideas and participated in group discussions, Melissa and Heather surprised them with gift cards for especially engaged participants. A fun, encouraging gesture that added an extra spark of energy to the room. The rewards were secondary, though, to the rich insights shared by students as they explored what wellness looks like uniquely for them during dental school.

There was a beautiful point in the experience when Heather led the room through a brief exercise. Drawing from her background as a yoga instructor, she teaches yoga in the park during Oregon's sun filled summers, guiding students in a simple breathing and centering practice. The room grew noticeably quieter as everyone joined in. For a few minutes, students were invited to release tension from shoulders, unclench jaws, breathe deeply, and sit in intentional stillness. It was a gentle practice, but for many, a powerful reminder that wellness doesn't always require large commitments; sometimes it's found in just sixty seconds of mindful breathing.

The luncheon closed with a sense of renewed connection. Students lingered in conversation; some discussing the pillars of wellness more deeply, others reflecting on how they might incorporate small daily practices into their routines. Many noted how valuable it was simply to slow down together, especially in a profession that demands precision, emotional resilience, and long-term commitment.

ASDA's early February Wellness Lunch served as more than a meal; it was a shared pause, a community reset, and a space for OHSU dental students to reflect on the habits that sustain them. By fostering thoughtful conversation, encouraging engagement, and weaving in practical wellness tools, the event reinforced that the pursuit of dental education is not only academic, it is deeply human. And caring for that humanity, one pillar at a time, is a vital part of becoming a dentist. ●



ODA STAFF



Smiles in Action: MDS and OHSU SOD Unite for 2026 Give Kids A Smile

By Lora Mattsen, Executive Director Multnomah Dental Society

COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS

ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, THE MULTNOMAH DENTAL SOCIETY partnered with the OHSU School of Dentistry to host the 2026 Give Kids A Smile event in celebration of National Children's Dental Health Month and what a day it was.

This year's event brought together compassionate volunteers, eager dental students, and community partners under one roof to deliver something simple yet powerful: healthy smiles and accessible care for children who might otherwise go without.

A Collaborative Effort with Lasting Impact

With support from the ADA GKAS Foundation, including donations of educational materials and supplies, the event once again demonstrated how vital strong partnerships are to community outreach. Their support has long been paramount to the program's success.

In a thoughtful expansion of services, MDS combined its annual Children's Health Fair with Give Kids A Smile, creating a comprehensive health and safety hub for families.

Alongside dental screenings and treatment, children received vision and hearing screenings, and families connected with community organizations offering valuable resources and information all in a welcoming, fun-filled environment.

Learning in Action: The Tooth Taxi Experience

A highlight of the day was the involvement of OHSU dental students, who provided dental screenings and treatment aboard the Tooth Taxi. Under the enthusiastic supervision of faculty, students gained hands-on clinical experience while serving the community.

It's a powerful combination students learning in real time, supported by seasoned dentists, while families receive critical care. The energy, curiosity, and fresh perspectives students bring to the event are infectious. Just as important, they leave with a deeper understanding of community dentistry and a reinforced commitment to service.

For many students, programs like Give Kids A Smile are formative

experiences. There is no better way to prepare for a career in dentistry than by actively participating in outreach that enhances oral health literacy and expands access to care.

A 26-Year Legacy of Service

MDS has participated in Give Kids A Smile since its inception 26 years ago. Over time, the program has evolved to meet the changing needs of the community, but its mission has remained steadfast: provide free dental services to children in Multnomah County who need them most.

With the generous support of corporate sponsors Henry Schein and Colgate, along with the ongoing commitment of the American Dental Association and MDS members, hundreds of children have received essential dental care over the years. The program exemplifies the profession's highest ideal service, education, and equitable access to care.

Building the Future of Dentistry

While the structure of the event may have changed over the years,



LORA MATTSSEN

one constant remains: the eagerness and dedication of OHSU School of Dentistry and its students. These future dentists want to be part of community outreach. They want to learn. They want to serve.

For those of us who have worked alongside them, it is especially meaningful to watch former student

volunteers grow into practicing dentists who now carry forward the same spirit of service. Many who once participated in Give Kids A Smile as students are now established professionals, some even returning to volunteer themselves.

That continuity is something to be proud of. It is a testament not only to the strength of the partnership, but to

the lasting impact these experiences have on young professionals.

Programs like Give Kids A Smile do more than provide care for a day – they build healthier communities and shape compassionate careers. And for everyone involved, they create memories that last far beyond a single Saturday in February. 📸

LORA MATTSSEN



Marion Polk Dental Society Hears from Salem Mayor Julie Hoy

By Michael Trevino, Marion Polk Dental Society Executive Director

SALEM MAYOR JULIE HOY ADDRESSED THE MARION POLK DENTAL SOCIETY at their January 26 membership and CE meeting. The mayor provided an update on key city initiatives, including public health investments,

economic development, and efforts to strengthen community services. She emphasized the vital role dentists play as front-line healthcare providers, noting that oral health is closely tied to overall wellness and early disease detection. Mayor Hoy

thanked local dental professionals for their ongoing service, community outreach, and commitment to improving residents' quality of life, underscoring the city's appreciation for their partnership in keeping the community healthy. 📸

MICHAEL TREVINO



WCDS Reconnects: A Packed House for Education and Camaraderie

By Lora Mattsen, Executive Director Washington County Dental Society

THE WASHINGTON COUNTY DENTAL SOCIETY (WCDS)

hosted a long-awaited general membership meeting and continuing education course on Wednesday, February 18 and the turnout spoke volumes. The room was full, the energy was high, and the evening served as a powerful reminder of the value of gathering together as a professional community.

With a general meeting not having been held for some time, members were eager to reconnect. It was clear throughout the evening that the opportunity for collegiality, conversation, and shared learning was deeply appreciated.

An Engaging and Timely CE Program

The meeting took place at the historic McMenamins Grand Lodge, providing a warm and welcoming backdrop for the evening's program.

Dr. Daniel Petrisor and Dr. Jonathan Jelmini delivered an informative and clinically relevant course on *Benign and Malignant Pathology of the Jaw, Head & Neck*.

Their presentation sparked thoughtful discussion and active participation from attendees. Members engaged in meaningful dialogue, asked insightful questions, and shared perspectives from their own practices, turning the CE course into a truly collaborative learning experience.

Combined with good food, drinks, and relaxed conversation, the event struck the perfect balance between education and camaraderie.

ODA Updates and Legislative Insights

Dr. Barry Taylor provided an overview of current news and initiatives from the Oregon Dental Association (ODA). He encouraged

members to attend the upcoming Oregon Dental Conference and regional events, emphasizing the importance of staying engaged at both the component and state levels.

In addition, he shared a legislative update, reinforcing how advocacy efforts continue to shape the future of dentistry in Oregon and why member involvement remains critical.

A Strong Return to Connection

The February 18 gathering was more than just a meeting – it was a celebration of reconnection. The enthusiastic turnout and lively interaction underscored the strength of the Washington County dental community and its commitment to lifelong learning and professional support.

It was a great night for everyone and a promising sign of continued engagement and momentum for WCDS in the year ahead. 🌟



LORA MATTSSEN

2025 oda

Annual Report



Barry Taylor, DMD,
ODA Executive
Director

IN LAST YEAR'S ANNUAL REPORT, I EMPHASIZED the importance of our members serving as ODA membership ambassadors by encouraging colleagues to join our association. While we continue to experience a downward trend in overall membership, it is encouraging to note that we welcomed the highest number of new members in five years – 136 in total. Some factors affecting membership are beyond our control, such as the increased number of dentists retiring over the past five years. Nevertheless, it is reassuring to see that many dentists still recognize the value of being a member.

Our dedicated ODA team of eight staff members worked diligently to support our members and help achieve significant accomplishments. We are committed to making you proud of your association and are honored to serve you. The ODA benefits from outstanding guidance and leadership provided by our Board of Trustees, Councils, Committees, component leaders, and others who volunteer in leadership roles. In addition to the 18 members of the Board of Trustees, more than 50 members serve in component leadership positions, and over 50 members contribute to Councils or Committees. Several others volunteer their time on external committees, representing the Oregon Dental Association within the Oregon Health Authority, the Oregon Board of Dentistry, and other organizations. The ODA is widely recognized as a leading source of oral health expertise.

Our legislative agenda is a prime example of our member-driven approach. Although our proposed bills did not pass in 2025, I am pleased to report that they have been reintroduced for the 2026 short session and are on track for passage this year. Our advocacy efforts and legislative initiatives originate from ideas and concepts submitted by members, which are then thoroughly reviewed by our Regulatory Affairs Council. Upon approval by the RAC, the Board of Trustees finalizes the legislative agenda.

This collaborative process was also evident in the significant change approved by the 2025 House of Delegates: a trial period suspending the House of Delegates and replacing it with a hybrid Annual Membership Meeting to be held during the Regional Event. Members were given multiple opportunities to share their perspectives, the Board engaged in extensive discussions about the format, and the House of Delegates ultimately approved the change with some modifications.

The Oregon Dental Association remains a member-driven organization, and your participation truly matters. Whether it's for continuing education, advocacy, or community building, your association is here to support you. More than a hundred members generously volunteer their time to keep the ODA relevant and to help guide our direction. There is no substitute for the ODA, and our team is deeply grateful to every member who supports the ODA mission.

Advocacy

2025 Legislative Session Report

The 2025 Oregon Legislative Session concluded after a challenging six months marked by one of the most difficult budget environments

the state has faced in nearly two decades. The Oregon Dental Association (ODA) entered the session with a focused Legislative Agenda centered on dental insurance

reform, a dentist and dental hygienist compact, and reimbursement rate-setting reform. However, shifting fiscal and political realities required much of the session to focus on

defending the profession rather than advancing proactive priorities.

Governor Tina Kotek identified transportation, wildfire funding, education, behavioral health, and housing as top legislative priorities. Negotiations on transportation and wildfire funding continued until the final days of the session. At the same time, a weakened revenue forecast and anticipated reductions in federal funding created an extremely difficult budget landscape, impacting many policy proposals – including those related to oral health.

Although ODA worked extensively to position its priority initiatives for success, the dental insurance reform package and reimbursement rate proposals did not advance due to budget limitations. The proposed dentist and dental hygienist licensure compact also failed to move forward despite efforts to differentiate it from other compacts and secure neutrality from the Oregon Board of Dentistry.

Despite these challenges, ODA's Government and Regulatory Affairs team achieved several significant defensive victories that protected dental practices and patients. Key successes included preventing dental practices from being included in statewide noncompete bans and protecting dentistry from an expansion of the Statute of Ultimate Response (SOUR) from five to ten years, which would have increased liability exposure for providers.

While fiscal constraints limited progress on proactive initiatives, these defensive wins demonstrate the strength and effectiveness of ODA's advocacy efforts. The session reinforced the importance of strategic

collaboration, persistent advocacy, and long-term planning as ODA prepares for future legislative cycles.

ODA's Proactive 2025 Legislative Agenda

The following bills were introduced with legislators and partner organizations and prioritized by ODA's Legislative Taskforce.

Dental Insurance Reform

ODA advanced a package designed to improve transparency and reduce administrative burdens for dental offices and patients. The proposal included:

- **Retroactive denials:** Limiting the time frame insurers can demand refunds on previously paid claims
- **Prompt pay:** Shortening the time insurers have to reimburse dental offices
- **Assignment of benefits:** Allowing patients to direct insurance payments to their provider

The bill received a positive hearing with no legislative opposition. However, insurer concerns about the prompt-pay timeline and a \$500,000 fiscal impact sent the bill to Ways and Means, where it ultimately stalled due to the session's tight budget conditions.

Status: Failed to move out of Ways and Means.

Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact

Dental and hygiene licensure compacts – already adopted in ten states – are designed to increase workforce mobility and help address staffing challenges. ODA collaborated with the American Dental Association, Oregon Dental Hygienists'



Association, and other stakeholders to advance the proposal.

Although the dental compact itself faced no legislative opposition, it became entangled with several other licensure compact proposals. Following concerns raised about a different compact, the committee chair halted all compact bills before the chamber deadline, including the dental compact.

Status: Failed to move out of the House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee.

Dental Reimbursement for the Oregon Health Plan

ODA also advocated for improved Medicaid reimbursement rates after the Oregon Health Authority announced cuts to dental rates for Oregon Health Plan patients.

The proposal would have required the agency and Coordinated Care Organizations to reimburse dental providers at a minimum of 59.8% of the average rate paid by private insurers in Oregon. Although the bill passed out of committee with only one opposing vote, the nearly \$90 million fiscal impact prevented it from advancing in the state's constrained budget environment. Efforts to convert the proposal into a budget note were also unsuccessful.

Status: Failed to move out of Ways and Means.

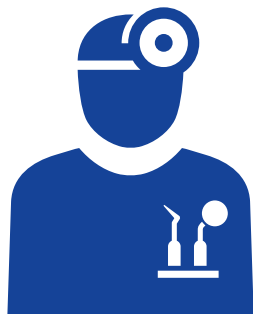
Membership

Recruitment, Retention & Member Engagement

Over the past year, the Oregon Dental Association (ODA) focused

strategically on recruitment, retention, and meaningful engagement across the state. Our efforts centered on welcoming new dentists, strengthening

relationships with current members, and creating opportunities for community connection at both the state and local levels.



1,910
Total Members

Through collaboration with local dental societies and the American Dental Association (ADA), we hosted and supported a wide range of initiatives designed to foster participation and reinforce the value of organized dentistry.

Member Engagement & Community Building

In 2025, the ODA team:

- Hosted events at the OHSU School of Dentistry, connecting directly with dental students and future members.
- Helped coordinate a multi-component Fall Kick-Off Tailgater at the ODA building, bringing members together in a spirit of camaraderie.
- Visited multiple component meetings and local events across the state.
- Held the 2025 Regional Event in Florence at Salishan Resort, providing a premier setting for connection and continuing education.
- Awarded four local component grants to support in-person events focused on engaging new dentists and non-members.

Wellness

2025 was a year of growth, collaboration, and continued leadership for the Oregon Dental Association (ODA) Wellness Initiative. Under the leadership of Chair Julie Spaniel, the Wellness Committee expanded its

These efforts would not be possible without the dedication of local dental society leaders and staff. Their commitment to fostering participation at the grassroots level remains critical to member satisfaction and long-term growth.

Membership Growth & Retention

We are pleased to report strong membership performance in 2025:

- **136 new members welcomed**
- **1,910 total members statewide**
- Representing **46.2% of active dentists in Oregon**

These results reflect the collective efforts of volunteer leaders, component societies, and ODA staff across the state.

As we move through the coming year, our focus remains twofold: retaining current members and clearly demonstrating the value of membership to all Oregon dentists. Our strength truly comes in numbers. We encourage members to share their positive ODA experiences with colleagues and invite them to join the organized dentistry community.

CRM Conversion & Member Portal Enhancements

In conjunction with the ADA, ODA transitioned to a new customer relationship management (CRM) system in 2025. Members now access their accounts through the enhanced ADA portal, where they can:

- Manage membership information
- Pay dues
- Purchase ADA continuing education and resources

reach across Oregon and District 11 by strengthening peer-support networks, enhancing Wellness Ambassador training, and reinforcing ODA's commitment to reducing stigma around mental health in dentistry.



136
New Members

We appreciate members' patience during this transition. We encourage anyone experiencing portal issues to contact the ODA office for assistance.

Website Enhancements & Workforce Resources

To better protect and personalize member benefits, many pages on the ODA website are now accessible exclusively through ADA member login credentials. This ensures that members-only resources remain secure and tailored to ODA dentists.

Notably, new workforce resource webpages were added in 2025, creating a centralized location for members to access tools, information and updates related to workforce challenges and solutions.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward the future, the Oregon Dental Association remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening organized dentistry across the state. Through recruitment initiatives, enhanced member resources, component collaboration, and strong leadership engagement, we continue building a professional community where dentists thrive.

Leadership & Advocacy

In 2025, ODA helped advance the adoption of non-stigmatizing licensure language by the Oregon Board of Dentistry, an important milestone led by Dr. Julie Spaniel,

Dr. Barry Taylor, and Brett Hamilton. This change reflects a broader shift toward recognizing that mental health challenges are common and manageable. ODA also continued advocating for sustained funding for the Oregon Wellness Program, which provides confidential support for health professionals statewide.

District 11 Collaboration

Participation across District 11 Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and Montana – strengthened in 2025. Representatives from each state joined ODA-led wellness meetings, helping streamline Wellness Ambassador programs, build a multi-state peer-support network, and share resources and best practices.

Wellness Ambassador Support

A key focus in 2025 was increasing visibility and accessibility of Wellness Ambassadors – dentists who serve as confidential peer resources for colleagues and students. Ambassadors offer judgment-free support and help connect individuals

with professional resources when needed. Efforts to expand access included updates to wellness communications, outreach at component meetings and dental schools, and sharing member stories to encourage open dialogue.

Peer-Support Training

A major accomplishment was a partnership with Hope For The Day to provide formal peer-support training through the two-part *Things We Don't Say* program. The training strengthened ambassadors' communication skills, emphasizing empathetic conversations, stigma-free language, and strategies for supporting colleagues in distress. Participants were also introduced to the Find Help platform, a tool for locating local mental health resources.

Outreach & Recruitment

ODA continued expanding its Wellness Ambassador network through component society visits, social media outreach, direct

communications, and printed wellness resources. Leadership also connected with dental schools to ensure students and early-career dentists are aware of available support.

Looking Ahead to 2026

In the coming year, ODA will continue growing the Wellness Ambassador network, promoting open conversations around mental health, and increasing awareness of wellness tools such as the American Dental Association Well-Being Index. The next Wellness Committee meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2026.

2025 marked meaningful progress for the ODA Wellness Initiative, with stronger peer-support systems, expanded training, and deeper collaboration across District 11. Through the dedication of ODA leadership and Wellness Ambassadors, Oregon continues to foster a supportive and resilient dental community.

Learn more: www.oregondental.org/wellness

Education and Events

2025 Oregon Dental Conference

The 132nd Oregon Dental Conference (ODC) was held on-site at the Oregon Convention Center, April 3–5, 2025. There were 45 speakers and co-speakers who presented 77 scientific continuing education sessions. Six of the sessions were hands-on workshops. The team-centered theme, *Connect. Learn. Grow: An Event for the Entire Dental Team*, continued to emphasize inclusive programming for dentists, hygienists, assistants, and office administrators.

The conference filled its room blocks at both the Hyatt Regency Portland and the DoubleTree Lloyd Center.

The exhibit hall was held on Thursday, April 3 and Friday, April 4.

There were 120 exhibiting companies. The Grand Opening Reception took place on Thursday to drive traffic to the hall, and a superhero-themed event was held on Friday. The Wellness Hub returned, along with professional headshots and interactive attendee engagement activities.

The Friday evening ODC Party was held at the Hyatt Regency Portland. The 2025 theme was *Casino Royale* and was sponsored in part by Delta Dental of Oregon and Astra Practice Partners. The annual New Dentist Social also took place on Friday evening and was sponsored by TDIC.

A total of 3,055 individuals attended the conference. We thank everyone who attended and supported the 2025 ODC.



3,055
Attendees

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The 2026 Oregon Dental Conference will return to the Oregon Convention Center April 9–11, 2026. It will be the final year the conference is held in April. Beginning in 2028, the Oregon Dental Conference will move to early March to better align with the Oregon Board of Dentistry licensure renewal deadline (March 31) and the ODA membership deadline. The 2027 conference dates were adjusted to May 13–15, 2027 to avoid overlap with the Pacific Northwest Dental Conference.

Enhancements planned for 2026 include expanded exhibit hall programming with a Product Theater, food carts, a blood drive with the American Red Cross, a Happy Hour reception, additional hands-on engagement opportunities, and a new off-site event, ODC Night Out, at Revolution Hall sponsored by Travel Portland. The 2026 theme will continue to emphasize engagement across the full dental team.

BEYOND RESILIENCE: PROTECTING...

Continued from page 5

A Professional Responsibility

Dentistry asks a great deal of us intellectually, physically, and emotionally. That commitment is part of what makes the profession meaningful. We transform health, relieve pain, and restore confidence.

But sustainability is not automatic. It requires deliberate attention.

Using available resources does not signal weakness. It reflects sound clinical judgment applied inward. It protects not only our own health, but the patients and teams who rely on us.

Well-being is not separate from professionalism. It is what allows professionalism to last. ●

2025 Regional Event

The 2025 ODA Regional Event took place November 8–9, 2025, at Salishan Coastal Lodge in Lincoln City. The event is designed to provide high-quality continuing education in a retreat-style setting that fosters connection among dental professionals and team members. Educational programming was met with a camping themed social experience to enhance attendee engagement.

2025 Winter Webinar Series

The Winter Webinar Series was launched in 2025 to provide ODA members with Oregon Board of Dentistry required courses ahead of the licensure renewal deadline. The series is offered exclusively to ODA members at no cost.

The 2025 series included:

- January: Cultural Competency
- February: Infection Control
- March: Medical Emergencies Update ●

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<https://www.mydentalbroker.com>

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 The Dentists Insurance Company.....8
<https://www.tdicinsurance.com/>

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 Assured Dental Laboratory, Inc.....6
<https://www.assuredentallab.com>
 Custom Dental Prosthetics.....4
<https://www.cdppdx.com/>
 O'Brien Dental Lab, Inc.....12
<https://www.obriendentalab.com>

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
 Arrow Dental.....10
<https://www.astrapracticepartners.com>
 Kaiser Permanente Dental Care Program.....11
<https://www.pda-dental.com>

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