

Momentum

a DentaQuest Foundation Newsletter

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Letter From the President

These are exciting times for oral health improvement.

As of April 1, 2009, the Oral Health Foundation is the DentaQuest Foundation. Although the name is new, our mission and purpose are the same. Everything we do is driven by our mission to support and promote optimal oral health.

The DentaQuest Foundation is energized by the number of opportunities for us to collaborate with outstanding individuals and communities who want to make a difference in oral health access and disease prevention. Beginning in May, we are partnering with the Pew Center on the States and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on a comprehensive fifty-state assessment of the state of children's dental health in America. Children's dental health in the United States is an issue of great importance, but it is not getting the recognition and attention it warrants from policymakers, the media, or the public. This project will provide state-by-state data to make the case for improvements.

I call your attention to the **retrospective evaluation** of our Foundation. After completing eight years of grantmaking, we took time to look back at our strategies and what we accomplished. In the process, we learned valuable lessons that are shaping our current work and strategic directions. Other foundations seeking to make a difference in disease prevention and systems change may find what we learned useful too [\[more\]](#).

In my recent travels across the United States, I was told many times that groups across the country working to change oral health in their communities are watching the progress of the Better Oral Health for Massachusetts Coalition for strategies to apply in their communities. The

DentaQuest Foundation is providing the Web site and staff support, including a facilitator, to connect members of this statewide collaboration. Formed in June 2008, Better Oral Health for Massachusetts enjoys the active participation of a broad spectrum of individuals and groups working in oral health care, from programs to state policy experts, providers, and community organizers. Earlier this year, members organized themselves into work groups and wrote statewide goals for Assessment & Surveillance; Policy, Advocacy and Public Awareness; Prevention; and Workforce. Each of these groups is now starting the detailed and collaborative work of writing implementation strategies. Stay informed on the progress of this project at [[BOHMA](#)].

Coalitions are at the center of change and a focus of our work in 2009. Let us know what you are doing for better oral health. There is a lot that we can learn from each other. If you are a community health advocate, a local workgroup, or part of an oral health coalition, we want to know more about you. Please take a minute to tell us about your work by visiting our home page www.dentaquestfoundation.org and completing a short form to join our community. We'll share information on the work that is engaging advocates for better oral health in communities across America.

All of us at the DentaQuest Foundation are working to improve oral health within the United States, as well as in Massachusetts, which has been, and will continue to be our home base.



Ralph Fuccillo
President,
DentaQuest Foundation

With Gratitude to Departing Board Members

The Foundation extends heartfelt thanks to departing board members **Judith A. Jones**, DDS, MPH, DScD, Chairman, Department of General Dentistry, Boston University Goldman School of Dental Medicine; **Clare D. McGorrian**, Esq., Attorney, Health Law Counsel and Consulting; **Michael Nacey**, Esq. President, Weston Partners; **Shannon P. O'Brien**, former CEO, Girl Scouts Patriot's Trail Council; and **Scott O'Gorman**, Chief Financial Officer Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island. Their leadership, guidance, and dedication have been a key to the Foundation's growth and success in meeting our mission and in establishing us as a national voice for oral health improvements.

At the same time, we are very pleased to welcome new members to our expanded Board who will help us navigate the opportunities ahead as we work to improve oral health in communities of need. We welcome **Linda Niessen**, DMD, Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer, Dentsply; **Donald Kenney**, Chairman, President and CEO Equiserve (retired); **Marion Kane**, Executive Director, Barr Foundation (retired); **Caswell Evans, Jr.**, Associate Dean for Prevention and Public Health Sciences, University of IL at Chicago; **Norman Tinanoff**, DDS, Professor and Chairman, Department of Health Promotion and Policy, University of Maryland; and **Michael McPherson**, President, The Spencer Foundation. Their guidance will be invaluable as the DentaQuest Foundation enters a new era of oral health leadership.

Oral Health Awareness: *Not All Heros are Make-Believe!*

The work involved with changing perceptions about oral health is often challenging, especially in difficult economic times, so it is important to periodically celebrate the successes of allies and supporters. That is what Foundation grantee *Watch Your Mouth* does each February when it hosts a celebration of the state's Oral Health Heroes (3rd Annual) in the great hall of the Massachusetts State House.



Four Heroes were recognized: State Senate President Therese Murray, State Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli, Massachusetts Medicaid Director Tom Dehner, and Dr. Joel Pearlman, Associate Chief Dentist with Tufts Dental Facilities.

Ralph Fuccillo, President of the Oral Health Foundation, John Auerbach, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, State Senator Harriette Chandler and State Representative John Scibak, co-chairs of the legislative oral health caucus, and Paul Toner, Vice President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, spoke. Each speaker emphasized the importance of oral health to overall health and the negative impact of dental disease on children's success in school and in life.

The 2009 *Watch Your Mouth* Heroes made significant strides in keeping Massachusetts children healthy. Senate President Therese Murray and Representative William Pignatelli helped pass a landmark bill that increased access to dental care for children in need. Dr. Joel Pearlman, this year's Community Hero, has been attending to the oral health of special needs individuals in southeastern Massachusetts for more than thirty years. Tom Dehner, Medicaid Director, was a crucial part of the movement to promote access to dental care by improving the MassHealth dental infrastructure.

Over 150 advocates, legislators and consumers were in attendance to ensure that oral health remains a statewide policy and community priority.

Collaboration at Work

For several years, health professionals and community organizations sought a solution to the critical need for oral health care for families in the city center of Springfield, Massachusetts:



- **Springfield Technical Community College (STCC)** dental assistant faculty, screening students in area public schools, found children who had never used a toothbrush.
- **Partners for a Healthier Community Inc.**, affiliated with

Baystate Health, had established an oral health network (BEST) to link elementary schools with dental providers so children receive oral health care as early in life as possible. With waiting lists for prevention visits at dental clinics of local community health centers, BEST needed an expansion of dental facilities in the city to provide this care.

- **The City of Springfield** had successfully established a dental clinic in one local school. Even if portable dental clinics were established in additional schools, the next school in a child's educational progression might not offer access to a dental provider on site. A dental facility centrally located in Springfield was a better option.
- **The Western Massachusetts State Hospital**, located in a suburban town 30 miles from city center, had a dental staff able to provide additional access for MassHealth (Medicaid) patients but the distance and travel required to get there was a barrier.

This April 3, the vision of a city center solution was realized as the five-chair **Springfield Community Dental Clinic** formally opened its doors.

Frank Robinson of Partners for a Healthier Community leveraged a 2007 grant from the **DentaQuest Foundation**, in collaboration with Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) and the Western Massachusetts State Hospital. The new five-chair clinic is on the STCC campus, in the city center, where it will serve children and special needs populations. The hospital is providing the dental team.

Each stakeholder group has benefited from this partnership. **STCC** was able to refurbish its dental wing and now has a clinical site for dental assistant students. The **Western Massachusetts State Hospital** is now offering dental services on the STCC campus in the midst of a high patient population area. **BEST** program children and their families in the area now have a dental home in the city center within walking distance or accessible by city transportation. The clinic ensures continuity of care that will serve patients with Medicaid and provide a sliding fee scale for self-pay individuals.

At a conservative estimate, more than 10,000 families living within a mile of STCC will likely use the clinic's services. The Foundation is proud to be one of the funding partners of this innovative and collaborative community solution.

Photo above: (left to right) STCC President Dr. Ira Rubenzahl, Massachusetts State Representative Francis Coakley Rivera, and DentaQuest Foundation President, Ralph Fuccillo.

Let's Work Together

We hope the information in this newsletter inspires and motivates others to pursue improvements in oral health care access and prevention in their communities.

Let's work together. Call us at 800-451-1249. E-mail us at info@DentaQuestFoundation.org. Join our community at our [Web site](#). We are working to link people and programs for better oral health.

The mission of the DentaQuest Foundation is to support and promote

optimal oral health. We believe that as the largest funder solely focused on oral health in the U.S., we have the opportunity and a responsibility to provide leadership in improving oral health. Learn more about the DentaQuest Foundation, at www.dentaquestfoundation.org.

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