

Volunteering for your Association — Another Way to Give Back

By C.J. Henley, DMD



As dentists and health care providers, many of us feel the call to give back to our community. Events like the Mission of Mercy and Give Kids a Smile can make donating your time and resources back to the community easy. Volunteering is mutually beneficial for both the volunteer and the recipient. It provides physical and mental rewards; it brings people together; it promotes personal growth and self-esteem; and strengthens your community. However, in order to protect our profession, we need volunteers for the ADA, the FDA, and our district associations.

Part of what has made our profession so wonderful is due to the fact that dentists like you have given countless hours to organized dentistry. When we work together serving as representatives for the ADA and the FDA, we, as a group, have a loud and powerful voice in both Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. Likewise, our political action committees give the Florida Dental Association a voice when state representatives are debating legislation that affects our profession.

We all must engage in protecting our profession. By giving your time to the ADA, the FDA, and your local delegation, you will have the opportunity to discuss and engage with the issues that are most important to our livelihood. Today this is even more important than ever, as there are many changes on the horizon for our health care system.

Despite the huge impact the ADA, FDA, and local delegations have on your practice, it can be difficult to appreciate how decisions made by our leadership can impact our day-to-day lives. So, how can organized dentistry have an impact on your practice in a very real and tangible way? The majority of dentists today are still solo practitioners. This often can lead to isolation from colleagues and new ideas that can help your practice grow. The camaraderie that can be found in leadership of your local delegation can become an invaluable resource for ideas and advice to help any practice become more profitable and more enjoyable. Playing an active role in my local delegation has helped me quickly grow a large professional network of dentists and specialists in my area. This has proved to be extraordinarily beneficial to my practice, as I have had the opportunity get to know, personally, many

practitioners that I would not have known otherwise. Moreover, I now work with many of the dentists and specialists that I have met. This has been mutually beneficial to all of our practices, as we now refer patients to each other. This has helped my new practice grow. Likewise, and perhaps more importantly, when I refer my patients to other specialists now, I know them both professionally and personally, and I know that our mutual goal is to provide patients with the best possible care.

As a new dentist, the cause to protect our profession is paramount to my long-term success and the continued success of dentistry. All too often, we can look at involvement in organized dentistry as a burden. It is easy to look at member dues as an unnecessary expense, but my dues and the benefits they provide are only a small part of what organized dentistry can do for me and my practice. In order to get all of the added benefit, I have to donate my time, be passionate about the way I want to leave dentistry when I retire and make my mark on this outstanding career by leaving dentistry in a better state than I found it.

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