

MEMBERS SPEAK!

WHAT IT MEANS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ORGANIZED DENTISTRY

The mission of the GHDS Membership Committee is to passionately share the value of being an active, contributing member in the Tripartite System of the ADA, TDA and GHDS.



Eva Boldridge, DMD

I have always felt that as long as I was a member of organized dentistry, I would have proper representation for my needs as a dentist at the national, state, and local level. As a dental student, we were taught that there was strength in numbers, and in order for our field to be represented properly, we had to use an organized voice. That voice was organized dentistry. Since no organization will adequately represent you if you are not actively involved in it, I have tried to keep some sort of connection to our dental society. Granted – life can take you down roads that you may not have anticipated, and you may spend some time away, but in essence – no organization can give you what you really need if you are not actively involved in it.

Over the years, I have felt that our local dental society has not adequately represented the diversity of our growing dental provider population, and I have also spent time as a member of the Houston Asian Dental Society, the Charles A. George Dental Society, and the Houston Minority Dental Association. These organizations were alternatives for doctors of different ethnicities to have opportunities to network, learn, and have opportunities for leadership that was historically lacking in the GHDS. I am happy to see that the GHDS has taken the initiative to implement a Diversity and Inclusion Committee - I feel it is far overdue. Two years ago, I attended an Officers Installa-

tion ceremony, on a whim, and I was shocked and hurt by the fact that not one of the older doctors took a moment to acknowledge, speak, or even look at me – a fifteen year paying member of the Society. As one of only two black female doctors in the room, I felt I kind of stuck out. Instead of getting mad, I introduced myself to the newly inducted president, and later expressed my disappointment with how I was treated. That is how I became a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. I am committed to work towards encouraging younger doctors as a whole to be involved, and work for the change they want to see. If organized dentistry excludes, and not welcomes people of different ethnicities and sexual orientation – organized dentistry will lose funding, and political clout. That will hurt all of us as a whole.

With the onset of COVID-19, the ADA and TDA worked tirelessly to implement office protocols, and put pressure on state legislature to allow our offices to re-open. The TDA also ensured that offices had the proper PPE needed to properly protect ourselves, our team, and our patients. That benefitted ALL of us – members and non-members. There were some “bumps,” but that is to be expected with a hopefully, once in a lifetime event like a pandemic. Thanks to the protocols that were already in effect for universal precautions, dental offices have less than a 1% infection rate, and we have been able to stay open and provide healthcare for our patients SAFELY during a pandemic. Locally, we are able to open our offices again, pretty early in comparison to some other areas in the nation, and that was good. If that can be done during the pandemic, I wonder what could happen if we could unite, and work to make organized dentistry stronger? Let’s put aside our differences, see each other as equal, regardless of our race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, and see.

-GHDS/TDA/ADA 16-year member



Alex Barrera, DDS

As long as I remember, I’ve always craved the sense of belonging to something greater than myself. As a student, I quickly became fascinated with the world of organized dentistry and I was fortunate enough to have several mentors who helped guide me through my education and introduced me to the importance of getting more involved in my profession.

Now, as a practicing dentist, I’ve learned that dentistry can be much more than a one-on-one clinical experience. By getting involved with local and national organizations, I’ve become empowered to use my skills as a dentist to become an educator and an advocate for those underserved in health care. I’m now involved in organizations including ADA, TDA, GHDS, and HDA. The skills and knowledge I’ve gained through these organizations have given me the courage to help create the Houston Equality Dental Network, the nation’s first organized dentistry group specifically created for LGBTQ+ dentists and patients.

Organized dentistry has allowed me to feel fully fulfilled as a dentist as I am able to give back to the communities that have played huge roles in my success.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



Adrien L. Theriot, DDS, MSD

Organized dentistry has supported me for over 10 years, from pre-dental student to pediatric dentist! I have dreamed of becoming a dentist since I was a child and didn't have any family members as dentists so I didn't really know where to start on getting involved or getting in to dental school. From college to dental school to residency, membership in the tripartite provided me with the resources I needed to succeed in school, prepare for board and licensing exams, applications and interviews, personal and leadership development, combat student debt, and with mentors to call on for advice through it all.

When I was just about to graduate residency and was looking for jobs, it was a mentor from the GHDS that reached out to me and connected me with one of their colleagues looking for an associate. If it wasn't for that relationship and connection, I wouldn't be in the position I am now and loving where I work every day!

I volunteer as Chair of the GHDS Membership Committee so I can share with other dentists the value of being a member and all

that ADA, TDA, GHDS and ASDA has done for me every step of the way. Uniquely, during 2020 the year of COVID-19, our organizations have created resources, toolkits, access to PPE, and fought to reopen our practices so we could safely care for our patients, and not delay necessary dental care. This has been one of the most difficult times we have faced in our careers. Our leaders (local, state, national), lobbyists and organization staff immediately hit the ground running for all dentists everywhere. I'm so thankful for the tripartite fighting for our profession. I hope all of my fellow dentists see the real value in membership, join, and become involved with me. If it's not for the continuing education, publications, socials, peer review and exclusive discounts... it's for a unified voice. Let's protect our profession so that we can take care of our patients



Mariangela Arata Smith, DDS

I am a member of the Greater Houston Dental Society because I want to maintain an active role in organized dentistry while building long-lasting relationships with my peers. Since the beginning of dental school, I knew I wanted to have a voice within dentistry. Thus, I quickly joined the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) my first year as Events Coordinator and was heavily involved throughout my time as a student. When I graduated in 2018, I con-

tinued to participate as a member, and I am currently actively involved on the Membership Committee.

I value my GHDS membership because it allows me to connect with colleagues, interact with great mentors, and shape the future of our profession. Whether is it a continuing education course, a happy hour, or an opportunity to serve the community, the GHDS offers something for everyone wanting to become involved at the local level. Furthermore, I value my membership in the organization because it has allows me to socialize with like-minded dentists whose guidance has helped me navigate the trials of our profession, and in addition, constantly makes me a better clinician!



Tammeka Nickleberry, DDS

I am excited to be in the space of organized and cohesive dentistry! Serving in organized dentistry is not only a privilege, but our responsibility. There is no better way to give back to a profession that has given so much to me. In an effort to keep our independence as dentists, it can often times feel like you are on your own little private island of oral healthcare, human resource needs and business management without another soul in sight. The Greater Houston Dental Society provides a way of connecting, sharing, strategizing and bonding with other dentist "island owners."

As we have seen with recent times, we are very much affected by what happens in our world. Organized dentistry more than proved our need for this platform by way of advocating for the livelihood of our practices locally, as well as, worldwide. It is a priceless resource for our profession.

My hope is that we can continue to advance dentistry through advocacy with our dental societies, as well as, through mentorship and the assembly of our peers. We are stronger as a profession when we take the time to pour into each other individually.

MEMBERS SPEAK!

WHY I AM A MEMBER AND HOW I VALUE MY MEMBERSHIP

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WHAT IT MEANS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ORGANIZED DENTISTRY



Matthew Franzen, DDS

First and foremost, I would like to say how great it is to finally be back with the Greater Houston Dental Society after my two-year hiatus in Killeen, TX with the Central Texas Dental Society. It has truly been a rollercoaster year moving cities in the middle of a pandemic. But I feel the GHDS has made my transition back into the Greater Houston den-

tal community seamless. The first email I received from the GHDS was an invite to the Dental Health Committee's next virtual meeting which ended up, for me at least, to be a good reunion of old friends.

For those who do not know me, I have spent a significant portion of my life in and around the dental field being a second-generation dentist. I have had the honor of learning from extremely experienced mentors in the profession. I received my D.D.S. from the University of Texas School of Dentistry, or as my mom would call it, UTDB as in its former name the University of Texas Dental Branch.

This is where I was fortunate enough to be a part of the American Student Dental Association and begin my involvement in organized dentistry. It is important to clarify a potential caveat, I used the word "involvement" over "membership" for a very important reason. Though membership is important in the grander scheme of things, the more involved I became, the more doors opened for me. Just about every doc that took me under their wing was involved in some sort of organized dentistry. Some were in almost every dental organization known to man and very involved in all of them. Others had their pick of the ones in which they were more involved, and a few chose to dedicate their time to just one or two organizations. All of these dentists left their mark in dentistry and have either left the profession better that it was when they started, or are in the process of doing just that right now. I will not start listing names because this Journal probably would not print a 100-page article from me, but it is important to give credit to the type of dentist who has helped me get where I am today.

I have been involved with the TDA Smiles Foundation very heavily since I was an undergraduate student at Texas Tech University,

and it still takes up a large portion of my extracurricular involvement outside of the office and meetings. There is a lot of credit that they would not ask for, but they need to be given for how much they have helped communities all over Texas as well as the great profession of dentistry. As a native Houstonian, I have spent many years with the GHDS and volunteering in Give Kids a Smile Days, as well as the infamous Star of the South Dental Meetings! Now that I am back in Houston and practicing, I will take what I have learned from those mentors and use it not only to better myself even more, but hopefully, become a mentor myself, one day.

Lastly, I think it is important in life to pause and reflect. Plants cannot grow without water and sunlight, relationships cannot grow without compassion and compromise, communities cannot grow without people and organization. Dental organizations unite the dental community, providing a voice. If you have ever been to a home game for your favorite football team and the crowd roars when the visiting team is in huddle, then you know how much a voice can matter. We need that voice in organized dentistry to be powerful and strong. It is truly amazing that the diversity of dental organizations is very significant and broad, yet somewhat underutilized. From what I heard on the grapevine amongst newer graduates, it is difficult to see the benefit in joining organizations. I understand that, at least right now, it actually can be difficult to see much benefit in the midst of a pandemic. But this goes beyond immediate gratification, it goes toward tomorrow, not today. My mother paid her dues for me too, not just herself. I will pay dues for myself and whoever takes my place in life. I plan on continuing my involvement in organized dentistry for myself, for dentistry, for the community, and for the future. (This is where we



Faisal Khan, DDS

After I relocated from another state/city more than 10 years ago, I joined organized dentistry including our tripartite (ADA/TDA/GHDS) which allowed me to safely plant my feet in the Houston area. Through local organizations like the GHDS and the HAPD (Houston Academy of Pediatric Dentistry), I was able to meet peers, colleagues, mentors (Drs. David Tang and John Novak) and great friends.

I have even been fortunate to take on leadership roles, especially within HAPD, as secretary, vice-president, and ultimately, president. Staying involved with organized dentistry allows me to step outside of my day-to-day chores of private practice, and grants me the opportunity to do good work for dentistry on a global scale, even if it is only local chapter organizations.

I recommend new graduates, and highly recommend out-of-state graduates, to get more involved with local chapters of organized dentistry. It's a great way to help yourself become a better dentist.