

Expanding the Mission of the Minnesota Dental Foundation

Stephen F. Litton, D.D.S., Ph.D.*

You may have noticed that articles about the Minnesota Dental Foundation have appeared in every issue of *Northwest Dentistry* over these last several years. Whether it is a list of donors (we really appreciate each and every one who has donated cash or in-kind products/services to the Foundation!) or an article about one of the many projects of the Foundation like Mission of Mercy or Donated Dental Services, we have tried to inform the Minnesota Dental Association's membership that its Foundation is extremely active in trying to fulfill its vision of eliminating unmet oral health needs in Minnesota.

However, because *Northwest Dentistry* is not sent to retired members, a significant number of dentists in Minnesota have no idea about the efforts of the Minnesota Dental Foundation to eliminate unmet oral health needs for the underserved in our state.

This has changed.

With the support of the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota Dental Association, *Northwest Dentistry* will now be sent to the retired life members of the Association. This class of members has paid dues for decades and has supported the efforts of the Association. Whether the retired member was a dues-paying member or one who was very active in the Association, each and every one of them contributed to the success of the MDA in representing the dentists of Minnesota to policymakers and to the public.

Northwest Dentistry will now be sent to the retired members of the Association.

Retired members, even though no longer practicing dentistry, still have the opportunity to give back. Some programs of the Foundation, like Mission of Mercy, require hundreds of volunteers. As well, volunteers who are not dentists are needed so retired members can volunteer. Because they have a dental background, our senior members can be even more valuable.

If the members we are reaching out to are recent retirees who still have their dental licenses, they can participate in the Retired Dentist Program, where the dentistry they do is for the underserved who have a difficult time accessing much-needed dental care. These retired dentists still have expenses in order to keep their licenses active. The Retired Dentist Program reimburses them for the costs of keeping the license active such as license renewal, liability insurance, and C.E. credits. Please visit mndentalfoundation.org for more information.

To the active members of the Association, we stress that the Foundation is always looking for volunteers. Two programs where you can perform the volunteer dentistry in your own office are Give Kids a Smile and Donated Dental Services. If you want to volunteer outside of your office, you can participate in Mission of Mercy. There are a number of community clinics where dentists can volunteer in places like Sharing and Caring Hands in Minneapolis, Caring Hands Dental Clinic in Alexandria, or Hope Dental Clinic (formerly Union Gospel Mission) in Saint Paul. See

mndentalfoundation.org/volunteer for more places where you can volunteer your unique talents in dentistry.

Another significant area within the Foundation is helping newer dentists practice in rural areas of the state where there are significant shortages of dentists. One program, the Martha Mordini Rukavina Loan Forgiveness Program, helps pay down student loan debt to dentists who commit to practicing for at least five years in the Taconite Assistance Area (TAA) of northeastern Minnesota. The Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) funds this program. A second program, in collaboration with and funded by the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation, is called the Dedicated to Minnesota Dentists (DMD) Loan Repayment for Service Program. This program also will help reduce outstanding dental student education debt by up to \$200,000 for dentists who practice for at least five years in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in rural Minnesota.

Yet another, smaller, program of the Foundation provides free orthodontic treatment to children of Gold Star Families. These are families who have lost a parent in service to our country since 9/11. The free services are provided by the orthodontists of Minnesota in conjunction with Smiles Change Lives, a national non-profit that helps low-income families provide kids with orthodontic care. The orthodontists provide the treatment for free.

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***Dr. Litton** is the president of the Minnesota Dental Foundation. He has retired from the private practice of orthodontics in Minneapolis and Golden Valley, Minnesota. Email is slitton@aol.com

Guest Editorial

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And lastly, the Minnesota Dental Foundation has been providing grants to organizations and projects that provide dental care to the underserved. Many are community dental clinics, but there are non-dental non-profits that have an interest in making sure children and adults receive needed dental care at low cost or for free. These grants also go to community dental clinics involved in Give Kids a Smile.

So where does the Minnesota Dental Foundation get its money to fund all of these projects? For some of the major projects, numerous grants are written with the hope that the project is appropriate and the foundation or corporation grants us money. Many have, and some have not. The foundation that has been most supportive of our efforts has been the

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Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation. Other foundations, such as Patterson Foundation, Medica Foundation, Walmart Foundation, and DentaQuest Foundation also have supported MDF projects and programs.

But our most consistent funders are the dentists of Minnesota. Whether by the dues check-off, the annual fund drive, or unrestricted donations, these individual dollars add up. And we hope that more and more dentists will become donors.

We have two fundraising programs. The Wall of Wine at the Star of the North Annual Session has been raising money for the last five years. Along with raising money, it has been great exposure for the Foundation to dentists, attendees, and the hundreds of exhibitors at the meeting.

This fall, on October 13th, the Foundation will present the third OneSmile Gala, at International Market Square. This event, along with games and silent auctions, has become the major internal fundraiser of the Foundation. We hope to see you there.

Back in 2008, the Board of the Minnesota Dental Foundation started discussing the idea of a planned giving program. That program was launched in 2010 as the Legacy Circle. Anyone can join the Legacy Circle by designating the Minnesota Dental Foundation as a beneficiary of his or her life insurance policy, will, or trust. It's easy to do, so discuss this with your estate planning professionals. For those who already have committed to the Legacy Circle, we appreciate your forward-looking vision.

If you have any questions about the Minnesota Dental Foundation, please speak with any of the board members or contact me at sflitton@aol.com or (612) 868-9580. ■