
Remarks on Receiving the 2001 Public Service Award

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Delivered by William R. Maas, DDS, MPH

I am honored to receive the Public Service Award from the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and regret that I cannot be with you today, on the occasion of your annual meeting, to accept this recognition in person.

As leaders concerned with preventing oral diseases and adverse conditions, and promoting and protecting health, members of this association know the importance of oral health as an inextricable component of general health and well-being. You also have experienced firsthand the oral health disparities faced by our nation. I believe the report "Oral Health in America: a Report of the Surgeon General" and the Surgeon General's conference and workshop on children and oral health have given the American people a new perspective on oral health. The letters and comments I have re-

ceived and the conferences I have attended since that time reflect the multiple interests in oral health by both patient and health provider communities.

However, I share your concern that the significance of oral health is insufficiently understood by too many of the American populace, policy makers, and health practitioners. As you know, in the report I pointed out the need to change these perceptions. Your organization is uniquely positioned to address this need and other aspects of the National Oral Health Plan that I called for in the report's Framework for Action.

Effective public-private collaborations will be needed to develop this plan and to achieve success. The work you have done related to the Healthy People initiative provides a wonderful foundation and outcome measures for

the national plan, so you are well on your way.

This award has special significance for me because I know that the membership of this association will provide active leadership in developing and sustaining effective partnerships to address key issues raised in the report. I have said on several occasions that things are never the same after a Surgeon General's report, and that the Surgeon General is never the same after a report. This is the case with oral health. You have my full commitment and support. We all have a lot of work to do in expanding the programs that are making a difference and in creating programs that will make a difference to all Americans.

Thank you for this award and your recognition. I also want to thank you for your dedication to promoting and improving health.