

President's Welcome and Address

Kim McFarland, DDS, MPH

Good morning and welcome to the National Oral Health Conference. Three years ago, the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) and American Association for Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD) decided to meet jointly and see if coming together for one national meeting focused on dental public health would be of interest to anyone. As you can see by the attendance here today, the response has been overwhelming. Our joint meeting continues to grow with more events, more learning opportunities, and record levels of participation.

I would like to thank this year's meeting organizers and encourage you to thank these folks for the hundreds of hours of volunteer work they've contributed to make this year's meeting possible.

In addition to working on this meeting, AAPHD has been very busy. In fact, you can say the operative word for this past year is "New." We've hired a new executive director—Pam Tolson; moved our National Office to a new location; hired a new newsletter editor—Becky DeSpain Eden; hired a new webmaster and have a new website address: www.aaphd.org; conducted a full financial audit for the association (this is new for us, because it was the first ever); wrote a new constitution and bylaws, on which Dr. Rebecca King is currently soliciting comments; and signed a new affiliation agreement with ASTDD to continue further collaboration. In short, it has been a full year and I believe an excel-



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lent foundation has been laid on which we can now build our dental public health home.

It's interesting to note that what's been happening internally within our organization mirrors what's happening nationally. There is a new National Oral Health Plan Call for Action being led by Dr. Cas Evans of the Surgeon General's Office and the National Institutes of Health. Public testimony from around the country is being secured to develop a National Oral Health Plan. Likewise, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has instituted a new \$15 million oral health plan called the Dental Pipeline Project. Grant funds will be available to up to 10 dental schools for five years to develop community-based clinical pro-

grams that provide care to underserved populations and to increase recruitment and retention of low-income and underrepresented minority students. There is also a new State Action for Oral Health Access, a competitive grant program providing \$6 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to test comprehensive state approaches to access for low-income, minority, and disabled populations.

At the same time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration are developing new tools to assist in carrying out these programs. These tools include the National Oral Health Surveillance System, the Water Fluoridation Reporting System, and Safety Net Clinics for Community Health Centers.

Therefore, I believe the plan, the means, and the tools are coming together and the foundation for dental public health service is being laid. What we need now is your involvement, your expertise, and your leadership. Please get involved, volunteer, fund some aspect of this new national movement in oral health, and contribute in some meaningful way.

We have an excellent program, which I believe you will thoroughly enjoy. During the meeting, please make a special effort to enjoy each other's company, please make at least one new acquaintance and, above all, please make everyone feel welcome and remember you're at home here. This is our family of dental public health.