

AAPHD President's Welcome and Address

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It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 4th Annual Joint Meeting of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. The program planning committee, comprised of representatives from sponsoring organizations and agencies, as well as other partners who enrich this annual event, has modeled "Collaboration for Better Oral Health." Over the course of these next few days, it will become clear to all that it is indeed "Time for Action."

We welcome especially those of you who are not (yet) members of AAPHD. The National Oral Health Conference provides something for all those who have taken on the professional challenge of striving to meet the oral health needs of a community, large or small, whether they have heretofore considered themselves to be "in public health dentistry" or not. If this is your first such meeting, we hope you will discover many like-minded colleagues who can become integral to your personal network of professional support. And we hope you will return to your practices intent on sharing positive reports with associates, joining us again at a future annual meeting, and staying connected to the evolving science base by becoming a member or subscribing to the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry*.

We face new challenges in these times of high public needs and keen competition for public resources. Our conference agenda will both confront and inspire us to champion effective practices that are built upon a strong foundation and guided by science. Sessions have been constructed to enable you to interact with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to present and interpret new contribu-

tions to this science base.

State Medicaid program managers, we are pleased that you are here again this year. We hope you found your dedicated session yesterday to be very productive. We commend you for all the improvements that have been made in so many state Medicaid programs over the past few years. We hope that participation in the NOHC will broaden your understanding of the role of the Medicaid program within the full spectrum of policies and programs that influence the oral health of the public.

In previous years, the AAPHD president could use the opening session of the annual meeting to report highlights of the association's activities during the previous year. As this conference has expanded, however, it now seems more appropriate to hope members have kept abreast of developments by reading our quarterly newsletter, the *Communiqué*, which has been brimming with information this year. And for a discussion of critical issues for the association, I encourage you to attend the Town Hall business meeting on Tuesday.

Your attendance at the Town Hall meeting is very important. Two years ago we made the transition to our current national office management. Among the first activities was an update of the bylaws, which, among other things, clarified the responsibilities of the Executive Council. As this year began, the council found itself reasonably clear about membership and financial goals, but much less clear about how to focus the association's efforts, given the many opportunities competing for our attention. As a result, the council members committed an entire weekend, plus additional time for premeeting preparation and

postmeeting follow-up, to update our strategic plan.

We will introduce the skeleton of the plan at the Town Hall meeting, which will also provide an opportunity for you to advise your elected leadership regarding strategic goals for the association. Furthermore, you will have an opportunity to discuss the specific role of AAPHD in recommitting to a vision of "Optimal Oral Health for All" and focusing our efforts into the key strategies for which AAPHD's contributions are critical. And we do not want you to leave before directing your personal attention to identifying the specific action steps that you can undertake to support the association to reach its goals.

I would like take this opportunity to thank all the members of AAPHD who have generously donated to the AAPHD Foundation. The foundation is on its way to achieving its pledge goal of \$100,000. The foundation will help ensure that AAPHD can meet its goal of optimal oral health for all! We would like to have 40 new donors step forward with a pledge by the end of this conference. [*Editor's Note: At the Town Hall meeting the next day, it was announced that pledges had been received to raise the cumulative pledge total above \$100,000.*]

Throughout this conference, please take time to visit our exhibitors. Their support is instrumental not only to our ability to present a quality conference program; it also provides a lift to sustain our association's efforts throughout the year.

I look forward to greeting as many of you as possible individually over the next few days. I hope that you will find this meeting to be memorable, inspiring, productive, and enjoyable.