



ALUMNI NEWS

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

A Semi-annual Publication

Number 81

Chair's Message:



Greetings from Chapel Hill! As we welcome the positive start of a new academic year, there is a tremendous amount to look forward to here in the department. I am deeply honored and humbled to serve as your Chair and daily, I remind myself that our focus is always on our people: our dedicated team here in Chapel Hill and all of you, our alumni and friends. We often hear that change is the only constant, but that change is also the engine that moves us forward. By focusing on the solid foundation formed by our core values and our history, we are able to manage change successfully, turning it into opportunities for improvement and growth.

During the most recent residents' graduation banquet, where we celebrated Jason, Michelle, and Kaitlin, we had an opportunity to connect with our five most recent department chairs: Bill Vann, Michael Roberts, Tim Wright, Jessica Lee, and Kimon Divaris. (right photo) I want to make a special recognition of their immense contributions, vision, hard work, and dedication over the decades. I also want to deeply acknowledge their continuous mentorship, unwavering support, and willingness to always step in and help out. Serving in this role and building upon the groundwork they laid, it truly feels like standing on the shoulders of giants.



Because of our strong foundation, our department continues to navigate transitions smoothly. In a bittersweet but incredibly proud announcement, we recognized the tremendous news of Jessica Lee's retirement from the University on June 1st to become the next CEO of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). This appointment is a fitting recognition of her stature as a visionary leader in pediatric dentistry and health policy. I am deeply grateful to Jessica for her transformative leadership and the indelible legacy she leaves within our department. (left photo)



We are also celebrating another heartfelt transition--the retirement of our beloved Grayson. Grayson's dedication, hard work, and warm presence have been a cornerstone of our department's daily lives for years. (photo) We wish Grayson a joyful and well-deserved retirement, and we offer our deepest thanks for her incredible service to our UNC Pediatric Dentistry family. Please stay tuned for the announcement of a formal retirement party for both Jessica and Grayson later in the fall.



While we bid farewell to some, we are thrilled to welcome new faces to our team. Please join me in welcoming Caroline Ingraham as our new Patient Navigator for the predoc DDS clinic, Dental Assistant teammate Mu Pay, Tatiana Fedotova, as our newest Clinical Research Coordinator, Maria Camila Restrepo Ceron as Research Assistant, as well as our outstanding alumni Jina Yoo and

Anne Baker, who are joining us as new adjunct clinical faculty. To continue empowering our fantastic team, we are also looking forward to an upcoming departmental workshop on the coaching mindset by our own, Zsuzsa Horvath. ...cont



"No Tears, No Fears: Sedation and General Anesthesia in the Dental Office Made Safe and Simple"

Cara Riley, DMD, MS
Spencer Wade, DDS, MS

October 16, 2026

The course will be offered as an on-site plus Hybrid-Zoom

The course provides 6 hours of CE credit

See page 2 for more information and registration details!

...cont. There are many great things happening across our clinical and academic spaces. We are thrilled by the steady progress toward the new North Carolina Children's Hospital, a monumental project that will drastically expand our ability to provide world-class care to the children of our state. Our systematic data collection process to synthesize best practices, design ideas, and words of wisdom from peer institutions that operate similar hospital programs has begun, with Gail Rohlfing, Interim Chair at UNMC, discussing the collaboration between Children's Nebraska and UNMC College of Dentistry during her most recent visit at UNC. (right photo)

We are thrilled to expand our graduate clinic's offerings with several technology updates and additions, including a new pediatric radiology training manikin, an advanced 3Shape TRIOS 6 wireless intraoral scanner, and a versatile Solea all-tissue carbon dioxide laser. To safely accommodate these new tools and a newly acquired emergency cart, minor renovations are currently underway in the grad clinic, and we look forward to rolling out hands-on training sessions for our team soon. Of course, our people remain our greatest asset. This summer, we celebrated Ms. Terry Hurdle's 20 years of service with Pediatric Dentistry! Ms. Terry received her service recognition award by the Dean Guthmiller in a ceremony in May



(pictured left). In June, we also joyfully celebrated the graduation of our senior residents—Michelle Kim, Jason Lin, and Kaitlin Wilson. We are so proud of the exceptional pediatric dentists they have become! At the same time, we officially welcome our incoming all-UNC class of first-year residents. Academically, our faculty and trainees continue to shine on the national stage, boasting a fantastic showing recently at the AAPD Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, as well as at ADEA and IADR/AADOCR. Our faculty's excellence is further highlighted by successful new NIH grant acquisitions (Sawicki, Shrestha, Divaris, Slade, Sanders) and service activities such as the wonderful Duke Endowment grant-supported School-Based Oral Health Initiative (SBOHI) featured on page 4 led by Poojan Shrestha. We are also incredibly proud of the continued recognition of our faculty and alumni in prestigious leadership and service positions, at the AAPD, ADEA, and IADR/AADOCR; as well as Gail Rohlfing

being named Interim Chair at UNMC, and Christopher Adams being awarded the Capital Area Dental Society "New Dentist of the Year."

We must never forget that the successes we enjoy today were planted as seeds by our generous supporters. Our robust development program allows us to remain focused on our mission. The incredible success of the Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Initiative—raising over \$834,000 to date—is a beautiful testament to this community's spirit. Building on this momentum, I am thrilled to announce the establishment of the Keels Family Pediatric Dental Research Fellowship Fund, an exciting new endowment donated by Martha Ann Keels, that will directly support our residents' stipends and recognize their research excellence.

As you read through this issue, please mark your calendars for our upcoming Fall CE course, "No Tears, No Fears: Sedation and General Anesthesia in the Dental Office Made Safe and Simple," to be held on October 16, 2026. This is truly a team effort, and I am incredibly proud to be part of it. There is a lot to celebrate, and I am highly optimistic about the great things to come as we manage change by focusing on our fundamentals, our history, and our people. As alumni and friends, you are an essential part of this journey, and we want to continue hearing from you!

Warmly,

Kimon Divaris, DDS, PhD

Chair, Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health, UNC Adams School of Dentistry

UNC Dental Trauma Team Update

The UNC Dental Trauma Team continues to treat patients with missing teeth, whether due to congenital absence or traumatic injury. To date, UNC has successfully completed 129 dental autotransplantation cases.

Faculty member, John Christensen, has presented this work at the AAO and AAPD annual meetings, as well as at several regional constituent meetings and local study clubs. Ms. Melanie Raschke Bronson serves as the care team coordinator (Melanie_Raschke@unc.edu). Presentations are available in both live and virtual formats. For questions about specific cases or to request a presentation for your local study club, please contact us at jchriste@email.unc.edu.

Continuing Education

Friday, April 10, 2026, brought us an outstanding, stimulating, challenging and engaging CE course titled “Water Fluoridation: The History, the Science, and the Politics”. The course brought together multiple speakers to address the complex and currently controversial issue. We offered the course in a hybrid format that included both on-site speakers and by Zoom. We had 66 on-site participants at the Friday Conference Center in Chapel Hill and an additional 75 who tuned in by Zoom to hear the course presented by Drs. Johnny Johnson, Mark Moss, Gary Slade, Steve Slott and Kyla Taylor.

Future Continuing Education Courses

PLAN ON EXPERIENCING CE BY EITHER ON-SITE PARTICIPATION OR BY ZOOM (HYBRID) IN THE FALL. THIS HAS BECOME POPULAR AMONG OUR COURSE PARTICIPANTS AND WE WILL AGAIN OFFER BOTH OPTIONS FOR COURSE PARTICIPATION!!

Fall 2026

You have been asking for it and we have a CE course offering this fall that you will want to put on your calendar! The course will be offered on-site at the Friday Continuing Education Center in Chapel Hill plus by Zoom.

October 16, 2026 (8:30 AM-4:30 PM)

“No Tears, No Fears: Sedation and General Anesthesia in the Dental Office Made Safe and Simple”. Current concepts, procedures and protocols for providing both sedation and general anesthesia in the dental office will be presented and discussed in depth. Both speakers are board certified by the American Dental Board of Anesthesiology and they will address providing advanced sedation and general anesthesia care in a stress-free and safe environment. They will also address health issue considerations and offer insights into the clinical presentation and therapeutic options. The course provides 6 hours of CE credit.

8:30 AM-9:00 AM Registration On-Site

Speakers: Cara Riley, DMD, MS

Associate Professor, Anesthesiology-Pediatric Anesthesiology, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Aurora, CO

Spencer Wade, DDS, MS

Private Practice of Sedation and General Anesthesia

Chapel Hill, NC

On-site attendance tuition: \$350 Dentist \$175 Team/Staff Member

Zoom participation tuition: \$350 Dentist \$175 Team/Staff Member

*A generous continental breakfast will be available at the Friday Conference Center registration. A lunch and two breaks with snacks and beverages are also included, plus on-site free parking.

Questions; call (919) 537-3400, or register at the following website: <https://dentistry.unc.edu/cde/>

NEW 2025 ABPD DIPLOMATES

There were 395 new Diplomates of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry recognized and given their pin in May at the 2026 Annual Session of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry in Las Vegas, Nevada. This is a very important milestone in the professional career of these individuals. Those who have North Carolina connections by either residency training or practice location were:

Stephen Baer, Shamus Cooper, Erin Howard, Kayla Kopczynski, Maya Mathai, Scott McLaren, Saraat Mohamadu, Kaaenaat Mustafa, Kaitlin Gotschalk, Caroline Sawicki, Setu Shah, **Sungmin Sohn**, Corey Stahley and **Mark Veazie**.

Congratulations to all and best wishes for a rewarding and satisfying professional career in pediatric dentistry!

Bold: UNC Chapel Hill residency graduates

News

Update on the Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Initiative

The Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Initiative (JYLF) was launched in the summer of 2023 in a silent phase and then began the live phase, going live in October of 2024 under the effective leadership of Dorothy Pang (1991) of San Francisco and Mike Ignelzi (1992) of Greensboro. As chronicled in previous newsletters, an enthusiastic JYLF Steering Committee of alumni and friends has been campaigning and soliciting since the fellowship's launch.

The campaign will span 2025-29, and the fellowship directive is solely dedicated to enhancing the salaries of our pediatric dental residents. Because the fund was able to reach the UNC's minimum endowment requirement of \$100,000 in cash in less than 12 months after its public announcement, the proceeds will begin supplementing the residents' salaries in this fiscal year.

Currently we are 18 months into the active campaign and to date we have received over \$268,000 in direct gifts and additionally more than \$566,000 open pledges, totaling over \$834,000 for the JYLF. On behalf of the JYLF Steering Committee and all of us here in the department at Chapel Hill, we extend our heartfelt THANK YOU for all your generous support in donations and pledges.

What's next? Based on a detailed analysis of our donors, it is certain there is potential for more fund growth during the campaign's life cycle over the next few years. The JYLF Steering Committee is poised to continue solicitation of the alums who are still on the sidelines. In addition, there are several alums who have recently or will soon complete long-term pledges to the Tim Wright Fellowship Fund. We will be encouraging these generous donors to "keep the meter running" for the JYLF or with one of the other many funds in the Department. We urge all alums to get onboard if you have not already and please consider a contribution using this link: go.unc.edu/Lee

All our fund-raising efforts have been expertly managed and supported by Ms. Sarah Huppert, the Chief Development Officer for the Adams School of Dentistry. Thank you, Sarah, Mike, Dorothy, and the JYLF Steering Committee!

As you read in our Winter Newsletter '26 and may have seen in other media outlets, Jessica assumed the CEO position of the AAPD in July. We are thrilled that she will continue here as an adjunct faculty member and be engaged in our missions.

Bringing Dental Care to Where Children Are

A UNC School-Based Oral Health Initiative partnership with Families and Communities Rising

In North Carolina, where more than 4.1 million people live in a designated dental shortage area, many young children reach school age without ever seeing a dentist. The UNC School-Based Oral Health Initiative (SBOHI), led by the Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health, is working to change that by bringing preventive services like screenings, cleanings, and fluoride treatments directly to children in Head Start centers. The effort is supported by a grant from The Duke Endowment, awarded to expand oral health services for children across the state.

School- and center-based programs reach children who might otherwise go without an oral health provider. By delivering care where children already are, the program removes common barriers to treatment like transportation, and time away from school and work for appointments making preventive care more accessible to the families.

A Meaningful Partnership

At the center of SBOHI's work is a partnership with Families and Communities Rising (FCR), a Durham-based organization whose Head Start centers serve more than 500 children between the ages of two and five...

News of Alumni and Friends

...FCR's mission to support families and strengthen communities aligns closely with SBOHI's goal of ensuring that every child has access to preventive oral health care.

Through this partnership, SBOHI provides preventive dental care to eligible children across FCR's Head Start centers, bringing portable dental equipment to the center and setting it up on site. These preventive services are especially important in early childhood, when tooth decay can develop quickly, and many children have not yet established a dental home.

For children who need further treatment, or a place to call their dental home once they leave the Head Start program, the Adams School of Dentistry (ASoD) Pediatric Dentistry clinic in Chapel Hill is ready to see them. Following the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry's definition, the program aims to give each child a dental home: oral health care that is continuous, comprehensive, and accessible over time.

April Site Visit: Care in Action

In April 2026, SBOHI conducted its first site visit, to FCR's West Seminary location, where the team delivered dental screenings, cleanings, and fluoride varnish to enrolled children. Nearly 45% of the children seen had unmet dental treatment needs and were referred for follow-up care to our clinic in Chapel Hill and to local providers. The findings underscore how much unmet need exists even among very young children, and how vital timely access to care is for this population.

Just as telling was the response on the ground. Parents were grateful, FCR staff were delighted, and the children were thrilled to meet a dentist at their own center with big-toothed stuffed toys and stickers included.

Connecting with Stakeholders and Families

SBOHI's engagement has reached well beyond the clinic. In May 2026, our team joined FCR staff and stakeholders at the FCR Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) meeting to share knowledge and information. Our team presented on the importance of early childhood oral health to the committee.

Soon after, the team joined the FCR Fun Fair, a community celebration that brings together program partners, children, and families. Members of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, along with student volunteers, handed out oral health education and dental hygiene supplies to encourage preventive care habits in a welcoming, family-friendly setting. Events like the HSAC meeting and the Fun Fair are a reminder that oral health promotion works best when it meets families where they are.

Moving Forward

The work underway with FCR is an early but meaningful step toward better oral health for the children who need it most. As SBOHI develops its long-term plans under the grant, the lessons learned at FCR's existing Head Start sites will shape how services expand to additional centers.

The program also looks ahead to involving dental students in this work. Hands-on experience in school- and community-based care offers aspiring clinicians invaluable training and helps shape a next generation of dental providers who see community-based care as a cornerstone of dental public health. These are providers who will be equipped and comfortable serving the children who need them most.



News

Welcome to our new adjunct clinical faculty!

We are thrilled to announce and welcome **Jina Yoo (2011)** and **Anne Baker (2019)**, who as of July 1st, have officially joined us as part-time adjunct clinical Pediatric Dentistry faculty. We are especially excited about Jina and Anne's appointments, as both are graduates and dedicated alumni of our pediatric dentistry graduate program!



Jina Yoo joins us as an Adjunct Associate Professor. Since completing her MS, pediatric dentistry residency, and global health certificate at UNC, she has maintained a strong teaching link with our department. She previously served as a full-time clinical pediatric dentistry faculty member at UNC, before founding and directing Mebane Pediatric Dentistry. Jina will be with us two full days a week, serving as an attending and mentor of both pediatric dentistry residents and dental students at the Durham County Health Department dental clinic on Tuesdays, and at the ASoD on Wednesdays.



Anne Baker joins us as an Adjunct Assistant Professor. A true Tar Heel, Anne completed her DDS, GPR, pediatric dentistry residency, and MPH all at UNC. She has remained consistently involved with our department since graduation, notably as a regular lecturer in our Principles of Pediatric Dentistry (PPD) course. Alongside her private practice experience at Raleigh Pediatric Dentistry, Anne will be joining us two Thursdays a month to serve as an attending and mentor for our pediatric dentistry residents and dental students. We are fortunate to have two such exceptional alumni expanding their roles to help train the next generation of pediatric dentists at UNC!

Welcome to the Admin Team!

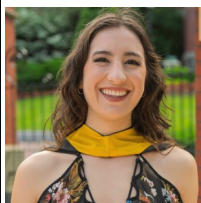


Welcome to our new team member, **Caroline Ingraham** to the department—we're so glad to have her join our team as Patient Navigator for the predoc clinic! Caroline is a graduate of The Ohio State University with a degree in Strategic Communication and a minor in Spanish, and she has a strong background in outreach, organization, and collaboration. We're excited to work with Caroline and look forward to the great contributions she'll make. Please help us give her a warm welcome!

Welcome to our new research hires!



Tatiana Fedotova, DMD, PhD, has joined our Department as Research Coordinator for the NIDCR-funded Dental-Child Interaction Training (DCIT) project. Tatiana holds a Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) with Honors, a Residency in Prosthodontics, and a PhD in Medicine. She brings over seven years of specialized experience in clinical dental practice, dental academia, and clinical trial coordination, having previously served as a practicing dentist and prosthodontist, an Associate Professor at RUDN University, and a hospital-based Clinical Research Coordinator and Team Lead. Working with Kimon Divaris at the UNC site of the DCIT study, she will oversee participant recruitment, clinical data collection using REDCap, and the coordination of educational training workshops designed to equip dental practitioners with positive, evidence-based behavior management skills for children's dental care.



Maria Camila Restrepo has joined our Department as a Research Assistant working with Miguel Simancas-Pallares. Maria Camila is a dentist, epidemiologist, and researcher born and raised in Medellin, Colombia. She recently moved from Baltimore, Maryland, after completing a Master of Science in Epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University and earning her dental degree from CES University in Medellín. Drawing on both her clinical and public health training, her research examines the social and structural determinants of health and applies epidemiological and implementation science approaches to translate evidence into community-centered interventions. In her free time, she enjoys attending concerts, dancing, playing the piano, and singing. She's currently looking for a choir to join in the area. A fun fact: she's fluent in English, Spanish, and German, and spent nine months in Germany as an exchange student.

News

Remembering Eugene Fredrick Howden (1971) of Pinehurst

Gene left us in January at age 83 after a long, courageous, and dignified fight with Parkinson's Disease. We want to express our sincerest and heartfelt condolences to his spouse Linda and their children Jeff and Kim, as well as their spouses and families. Gene and Linda have four grandchildren, two of whom graduated in May—one from Davidson College and Furman University. No doubt Gene was there celebrating them in spirit!

Gene was a native of Winter Park, Florida and a three-time Tar Heel alumnus. Most of you who are reading this Newsletter will remember him as the highly professional and long-term owner of Chapel Hill Pediatric Dentistry (28 years). In addition, he served on the Orange County Board of Health and was a valuable consultant to the NC Medicaid Program, playing a key consulting role to the NC Attorney General in overseeing compliance and regulatory enforcement. It is not an exaggeration to say he was a key player and consultant in saving the Medicaid Program from a disastrous outcome back in the early 1980s while he was assisting the Attorney General and FBI with Medicaid fraud issues. He was a champion of child advocacy par excellence in an era when child advocacy had not yet come into vogue.

Few will be old enough to recall Gene as a foundational leader of the North Carolina Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (NCAPD) in the early 1970s. He served extended time as the Secretary-Treasurer before he began serving in the other offices and then as President in 1979-80. Gene was a consistent leader with an indefatigable spirit and amazing attention to detail.

Most readers will also be too young to recall Gene as the original UNC Pediatric Dental DDS Program Director (1971-79) before he retired and entered private practice. He was a gifted and much beloved teacher and is the department's only winner of the enviable Richard F. Hunt Award for Teaching Excellence. He was a fine institutional citizen in the department and at the School of Dentistry. He was a champion leader for the Annual Campus-Wide United Way Campaign, as it was known in the 1970's. Brauer Hall still echoes with his exuberance when he received word the 1979 campaign had met its financial goal; he was, at the time, the Campaign Coordinator for the entire Carolina Campus.

In 2020, Gene was asked to attend the annual NCAPD-UNC Alumni Reception under false pretenses. He had been told that his old boss and colleague, Ted Oldenburg (1962), would receive a special award. Instead, we announced the Gene Howden Fellowship Fund in Pediatric Dentistry. Gene was certainly surprised by the honor and celebration of his consistent teaching, leadership and support of UNC and our department. It was a memorable evening!

With Gene's foresight and with gratitude to Linda and their family, the Howden Fellowship Fund received a generous bequest from Gene's estate, which will continue to support departmental resident stipends in perpetuity. We are so thankful for their continued generosity and our ability to honor Gene and his legacy in the pediatric dental and wider communities.



(above photo) Remembering **Ted Oldenburg (1962)** and **Gene Howden (1971)**, pictured in Pinehurst with Linda Howden in May, 2019.



(above photo) Jessica Lee, Linda Howden, Gene Howden, Thanksgiving 2019, Pinehurst

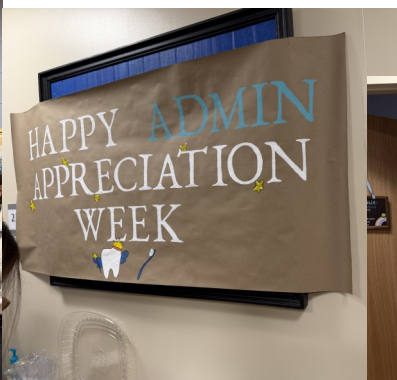
News

Congrats to **Gail Rohlfig (1996) of Greensboro** who has been named Interim Chair of the Department of Growth and Development at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry (UNMCSD) where she is an Assistant Professor and DDS Program Director. The UNMC College of Dentistry recently hosted **LaRee Johnson (1999) of Raleigh** as a guest lecturer for the pediatric dental residents. **Tegwyn Hughes Brickhouse (2002) of Bismarck, ND** joined Gail and LaRee in Omaha for a mini UNC Peds Dent Reunion.

(Photo) Left to right: **Gail Rohlfig (1996) of Greensboro, LaRee Johnson (1999) of Raleigh, Tegwyn Hughes (2002) of Bismarck, ND**. Image taken in the University of Nebraska Residency Clinic in Omaha, NE



Faculty, Staff, and Residents gather to celebrate Dental Assistant week and Admin Appreciation week!



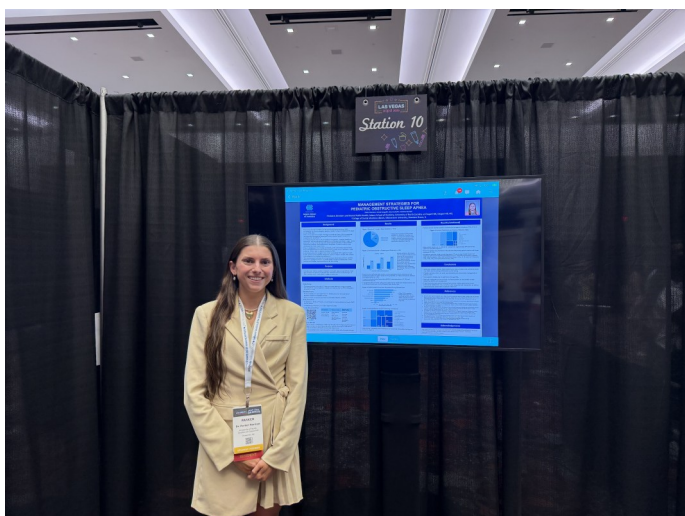
Congratulations to alum, **Christopher Adams (2023)**, for being awarded the Capital Area Dental Society "New Dentist of the Year" for 2025/26 (left) and the Dr Fricke Mentoring Award (right)!



Dental Foundation Fellowship Dinner: May 2026



AAPD Meeting: Las Vegas, May 2026



News From the Predoctoral Program

We had an exciting spring semester. With commencement just behind us, we are happy to announce that our students continue to accrue significant clinical experiences in pediatric dentistry, and we extend congratulations to our class of 2026! The class of 2026 had 89 graduates with seven applying to pediatric dentistry residency programs. We had six matches with institutions/programs across the country: University of Florida, Gainesville (Henry Brooks), University of Pennsylvania (Yamini Pandrapagada), University of Washington, Seattle (Anna Zheng), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—we are very lucky that Ysabella Gallo and Avery Spangler are staying three more years with us!

To recognize the hard work and dedication to pediatric dentistry, during the DDS Program Spurgeon Banquet, we traditionally present the AAPD Certificate of Merit award to one dental student. This year, we were proud to announce the award to Henry Brooks. Henry has a brilliant future ahead in the field, and we cannot wait to see him back in North Carolina after his residency program—we wish him all the best while in Florida!



(above photo) Kimon Divaris (2011) and Jessica Lee (2002) presenting the 2026 AAPD Certificate of Merit Award to Henry Brooks.



(above photo) UNC AAPD Chapter Executive Team. Upper row, from left to right: Brian Kelly (DDS Class of 2027), Ryan Millan (DDS Class of 2028), Sean Ahn (DDS Class of 2027), Ben Lee (DDS Class of 2026), Anna Zheng (DDS Class of 2026), Sydney Danze (DDS Class of 2027). Lower row, from left to right: Raven Sims (DDS Class of 2027), Rachel Gallo (DDS Class of 2028), Alexandra Ellison (DDS Class of 2028), and Kianna Dao (DDS Class of 2027).

Dental students are the bright future of pediatric dentistry. For these reasons, the AAPD has a dedicated space for them via the chapters—institutional organizations of dental students, and that are (usually) exploring a future interest in pediatric dentistry. We have a chapter here at school that has a long-standing leadership trajectory. Currently, our chapter has 54 student members from all classes. In this issue of our newsletter, and in the role of their faculty advisor, I wanted to take a moment to highlight the outstanding work our chapter is doing. As with many other organizations, they do follow a collegial leadership structure and currently, the chapter co-presidents are Sydney Danze and Raven Sims, both members of the DDS class of 2027. Their social media presence is strong, and you can find them on Instagram as @tinytarheelteeth in case you want to follow them!

Throughout the year, they organize multiple activities such as resident-student mixers, visits to offices in the area, faculty-student panels and in preparation for residency applications, journal clubs, fundraising and (among many other things) leadership activities for the annual Give Kids A Smile—they do it all! All these activities are entirely student-led.

A highlight of these activities also includes a periodic journal club wherein

they invite faculty and clinicians to discuss topics of interest in pediatric dentistry over lunch—it has been a wonderful opportunity for them to expand their scientific curiosity and promote engagement with the profession.



(right photo) student/resident social mixer.



(above photo) visit to Carolina Pediatric Dentistry with LaRee Johnson (1999)

News

This year, and thanks to the extremely well-organized work and leadership efforts from the chapter and in collaboration with the GKAS chairs, we had a successful Give Kids A Smile (GKAS) day. Over 170 patients and families were seen, and this could not have been possible without all their hard work. Notably, their fundraising efforts were superb! This year, the student group organizing GKAS fundraised slightly over \$30K in donations—such a historical mark! Thank you to all our donors and sponsors that made this beautiful event possible.

(right photo) 2026 GKAS Executive Team (from left to right): Hannah Archer (DDS class of 2027), Rachel Gallo (DDS class of 2028), Sydney Danze (DDS class of 2027), Alejandra Mel-la-Velasquez (DDS class of 2028), Sean Ahn (DDS class of 2027), and Raven Sims (DDS class of 2027).



(above photo) Sydney Danze (DDS class of 2027), Meredith Murphy (North Carolina Dental Society), Miguel Simancas (Class of 2022), Sean Ahn (DDS class of 2027), and Kimon Di-varis.

Announcing the Keels Family Pediatric Dental Research Fellowship



We are thrilled to announce the establishment of the Keels Family Pediatric Dental Research Fellowship, an exciting new endowment dedicated to advancing the future of our specialty. This newly created fund will provide support for pediatric dentistry residents' stipends while specifically recognizing and rewarding meritorious research carried out by our trainees.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Martha Ann Keels (1990) for her generosity and perpetual support of our program. This fellowship was established to honor the legacy of her father, Dr. Cameron H. Keels, who loved practicing dentistry in Morganton, NC, for 52 years. An exceptional lifelong learner who earned both his Fellowship and Master's from the Academy of General Dentistry, he deeply valued evidence-based clinical practice and would undoubtedly be proud to support the advancement of dental research today.

A champion of resident education and scientific inquiry, Martha Ann continues to make a profound impact on our program and the trainees who represent the future of our profession. Thank you, Martha Ann, for your enduring commitment to excellence in pediatric dentistry!

Residents' Corner



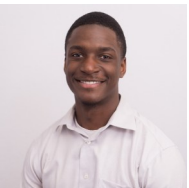
Caylen: It's crazy to think that second year is coming to a close and I'm almost a third year! Time has really flown by. I have officially completed my role of CRA this spring after being CRH in the fall. I have learned a ton and I'm looking forward to using this new knowledge as I spend more time in clinic this summer! Outside of residency, I am excited to get into some reading and journaling this summer as well as enjoying the warm weather!



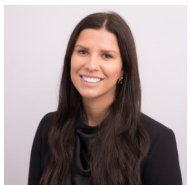
Samantha: Second year has flown by and been a whirlwind. Wrapping up my research, completing the first year of MPH, and completing my hospital OR rotation as CRH has kept me very busy! I'm thrilled to be the CRA this summer and welcome a new class of residents but will miss our 3rd years. It's hard to believe Sophia, Caylen, and I will be entering our third year together but hoping for a great year!



Sophia: I'm excited to have kicked off my rotation in the OR this summer while also helping plan a great interview weekend to welcome our applicants to Chapel Hill this fall! I recently wrapped up my first year in the MPH program in Health Policy and am looking forward to starting my summer practicum with the AAPD RPC, assessing oral health initiatives within the Rural Health Transformation program. In addition, I will be stepping into my role as the incoming Sam Harris Fellow with the AAPD, where I'll be evaluating the impact of G0330 in North Carolina's ambulatory surgical centers. I'll round out a busy (and exciting!) summer with my wedding in Colorado!



Osagie: I can't believe my first year is almost over! I have learned so much in clinic and in seminars/classes! I am looking forward to my rotations with anesthesia and pediatric medicine this summer! We recently completed our anesthesia didactic course, so it'll be nice to apply some of the things we've learned to the rotation. Outside of residency, I've been able to spend time with my fiancée and family. We are moving in a few weeks, so we're excited about this new transition!



Valentina: Time has flown by! I can't believe I am wrapping up my first year. I feel like I have learned so much already both in clinic and in classes. I am super excited to start my peds med and anesthesia rotations and feel so grateful to be a part of such a well-rounded program. Outside of residency, I have been enjoying reading, spending time in the sun, and playing with my very active dog (Lulu!).



Parker: It's hard to believe it's almost the end of my first year of residency! I've gained so much knowledge over the last year, both didactically and clinically. I am looking forward to anesthesia and pediatric medicine rotations this summer and starting the MPH in Health Policy in the fall. My husband and I have a few national park trips coming up- if you have recommendations for Great Basin or New River Gorge, let us know!

Our new third year residents, Caylen Davis (DDS, UNC), Samantha Glover (DDS, UNC) and Sophia Pankratz (DDS, Nebraska) are excited to be entering into their last year of residency. All three have served as Chief Resident for the Hospital and Chief Resident for Administration this past year. In addition, they have been immersed in their research and will be bringing it all together over the coming months. Caylen and her husband have settled into married life and recently celebrated their second anniversary, and Samantha got engaged to Alex, an oral surgery resident, last spring. Sophia will be getting married in August and we wish her and Nick all the best! What a wonderful time for all three of them!



The new second year residents, Osagie Ekue (DDS, UCSF), Parker Norman (DDS, U Penn) and Valentina Roa (DDS, UNC) are currently on their anesthesia and pediatric medicine rotations. They have been busy as well getting their research projects in full motion and attending the Pediatric Oral Health Advocacy Conference in Washington DC and the AAPD Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. They will soon become our chief residents of the hospital and administration. It is hard to believe they have finished their first year.

Residents Corner



Kaitlin: After graduation, I will be staying in my hometown of Chapel Hill and working at a local private practice. I am excited to start this next chapter along with my husband, Mark, and our one-year-old, Lucy! I will miss seeing my UNC Pediatric Dentistry family regularly, but I am glad to be close by.



Jason: After graduation, I will be sticking around the Triangle area and enjoying the newly married life! Still in the process of finalizing specific plans but, after 11 years here, I am looking forward to being just close enough to Chapel Hill!



Michelle: Michael and I are excited to be expecting our first child this November! We'll be remaining in Chapel Hill as I work in temporary positions before transitioning into a permanent role in the new year and preparing for life as new parents.

On Tuesday June 30, we said goodbye to Michelle Kim, Jason Lin and Kaitlin Wilson as they finished the program and are now pediatric dentists! We are so proud of them and all their accomplishments over the past 3 years. Of course, it is bittersweet to say goodbye but it is more like “see you soon” as we can’t wait for them to start the next chapter of their careers! We are all happy to welcome them as alumni, and they are forever a part of UNC Pediatric Dentistry! Over their time here, there have been lots of laughs, hard work, life milestones, and many children served in Chapel Hill and surrounding communities. We celebrated them on June 12 at our annual Resident’s Banquet. It is so fun for our entire team to be together as one community and honor our residents!

Kaitlin will be staying right here in Chapel Hill and working at Franklin Street Pediatric Dentistry. Michelle and Jason will also be staying in the triangle area in private practice and will update us when their plans are finalized. As a side note Jason got married on June 26 and we wish him and Laura the best! We can’t wait to hear how things are going and look forward to following your careers. We are so proud of all three of you!



Residents Corner

Welcome!



Ysabella: It is amazing how fast dental school went by! Immediately after graduation, I plan to travel, spend time with family and friends, and get settled in my new apartment. I look forward to starting residency this summer and exploring this next chapter!



Avery: As I finish dental school, I am looking forward to traveling with friends and family and taking a little time to recharge. I recently moved into a new apartment and am enjoying getting everything set up. I am so excited to continue my journey in Chapel Hill and start residency this summer!

Sending out a big UNC WELCOME to our new first year residents, Ysabella Gallo (DDS, UNC) and Avery Spangler (DDS, UNC). They are featured in another place in the *Newsletter*, so be sure to read the article to learn more about them. We are so lucky to have such great residents who work so hard for each and every day learning and providing optimal oral health care for all the children we treat here at UNC Pediatric Dentistry. Please say hello when you see one of them.



Residents Corner

On July 1, Ysabella Gallo and Avery Spangler started in our program! We are so glad to have them join us and can't wait for all our alumni to meet them. Both are ready to hit the ground running and are immersed in orientation activities! We welcome them as new members to the UNC Pediatric Dentistry family. So, let's get to know them:

Ysabella Gallo, a native of Florida, earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Boston College in 2021 and received her DDS degree this past May from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has earned many honors and awards throughout college and dental school. In addition, she has been a leader and participated as a teaching assistant while in dental school. Ysabella has been heavily involved in giving back to the profession and her community, in numerous volunteering and leadership roles. This included Give Kids A Smile and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America. She will be pursuing a Master's in Public Health and a Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry.

Fun Fact: Ysabella is on a mission to perfect the ultimate at home matcha latte!

Avery Spangler grew up in Winston-Salem and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health in Nutrition from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She continued her studies at UNC and received her DDS degree from the UNC Adams School of Dentistry this past May. Leadership and service are not new to Avery and she has served both in the dental school and in the community at large participating in Give Kids A Smile and SECU family house volunteer. She served as a teaching assistant in the DDS preclinical course in prosthodontics. She will be pursuing a Master's in Public Health and Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry.

Fun Fact: Avery has a love for soccer and while in dental school she has been a YMCA soccer coach.

Lobby Day 2026 Washington, DC



Residents Corner

Resident Research Updates

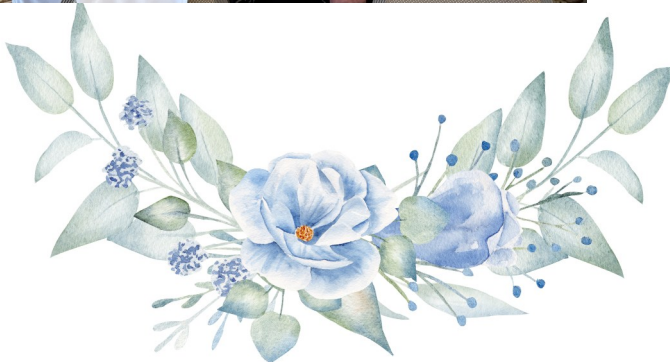
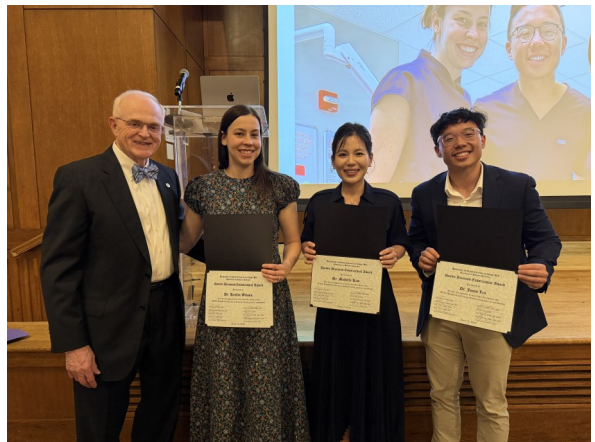
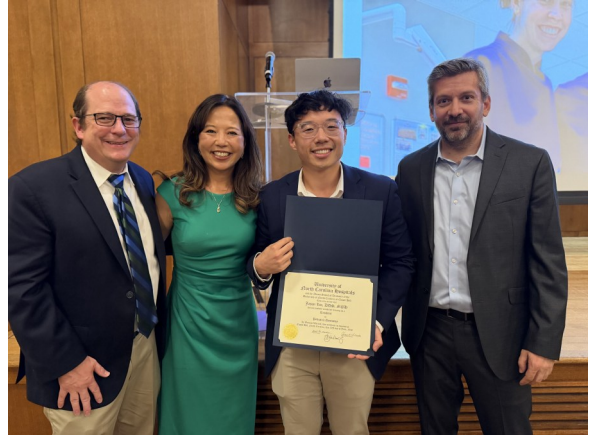
Laying the Groundwork

Our first- and second-year residents are making meaningful strides as they develop and advance their research projects. Our first-year residents, **Osagie Ekue**, **Parker Norman** and **Valentina Roa**, have each settled into their projects with great momentum. **Osagie** is working with Ann Sanders, Jeannie Ginnis and Rhonda Stephens on a descriptive study of the relationship between per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) exposure and dental caries using NHANES 2011–2018 data. This is a timely inquiry into environmental influences on oral health. **Parker** is working with Caroline Sawicki, Mitchell Levine, Linda Sangalli and Roopali Kulkarni on “Early Dental Risk Screening for Pediatric Sleep Disordered Breathing,” with IRB modifications underway and participant enrollment in progress. Parker also presented a related poster on management strategies for pediatric obstructive sleep apnea at the AAPD Annual Meeting in May. **Valentina** is actively in the clinical trial phase of her project on animal-assisted therapy effects on children with special health care needs, working with Caroline Sawicki, Laura Jacox and Jeannie Ginnis. Our second-year residents are advancing with notable energy. **Samantha Glover** has completed data analysis for her clinical trial evaluating the effects of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in pediatric migraine patients, working with Caroline Sawicki, Raz Shaikh, Kimon Divaris, and Ann Sanders. **Caylen Davis** is working with Kimon Divaris, Jeannie Ginnis and Di Wu on the occurrence of natal and neonatal teeth over a twelve-year period within the UNC Health System, with her IRB application currently under review. **Sophia Pankratz** has received IRB approval and obtained her dataset from the Sheps Center for her study on the impact and utilization of G0330 in North Carolina’s Ambulatory Surgical Centers, and is preparing to begin data analysis with Jessica Lee, Poojan Shrestha, Halley White and Mark Casey.

Crossing the Finish Line

Our third-year residents, **Michelle Kim**, **Jason Lin**, and **Kaitlin Wilson** successfully crossed the finish line! All three defended their Master’s theses and presented their research at the UNC Adams School of Dentistry Annual Research Day and at the AAPD Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. **Michelle** completed her study, “Oral Health Determinants and Access in Cleft Lip and Palate,” with Poojan Shrestha, Ronald Strauss, Tim Wright and Amelia Drake. **Jason** completed his investigation of “Influences of Parenting Styles on Behavioral Outcomes of Pediatric Dental Visits” with Miguel Simancas-Pallares, Jeannie Ginnis and Laura Villa-Torres (Gillings School of Global Public Health). **Kaitlin** completed her research on “Parent Supervised Toothbrushing and Associated Barriers and Facilitators in Young Children” with Poojan Shrestha, Kimon Divaris and Cameron Randall (University of Washington, School of Dentistry). Congratulations to **Michelle**, **Jason**, and **Kaitlin** on this tremendous accomplishment!



Residents' Banquet: June 12, 2026

Generosity of Alumni and Friends

Below is the list of gifts received by the Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health as reported from the Dental Foundation of North Carolina for the **calendar year 2025**. Your generous and thoughtful gifts are gratefully acknowledged below. We express our most sincere **“thank you”** for your continued support. Your gifts support our residents’ training, improves our graduate student learning center, acquires new technology and provide additional opportunities to enrich the residents’ educational experience. State and university support continues to be unpredictable and has made your support ever more critical.

Gifts received are invested and the interest from the funds is used to meet our graduate program needs described throughout this Newsletter. Your commitment to improving the graduate program is not lost on our residents, and it continues to cement the bonds among our past, present and future alumni and friends. Thank you very much.

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Other gifts

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GIFTS TO DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

\$10,000 plus

Jane Weintraub & Christopher Barker

*Deceased

Publications

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You can ensure the future of pediatric dentistry in North Carolina and the nation by supporting the different professorships and resident fellowships that benefit the school's Graduate Program. Donations can be directed to your favorite fund listed on the pledge card below.

If you are interested in establishing a new fellowship fund and naming it in honor or memory of an individual, your donations can be directed to this named fund through the Dental Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., the UNC Adams School of Dentistry's nonprofit foundation.

Many individuals would like to make major gifts to UNC-CH but cannot commit current assets for this purpose. Through a will you can make a more significant gift than you might have ever thought possible by designating a specific sum, a percentage or the residue of your estate to the Pediatric Dentistry Graduate Program. There are many options for providing a bequest that will leave a legacy of support for excellence in pediatric dentistry. To learn more about starting a new fellowship or making a bequest, please contact Sarah Huppert at the Dental Foundation at (919) 537-3257 or by email sarah_huppert@unc.edu.

Dental Foundation Estate Planning Language

"I give, devise and bequeath _____ percent (____%) of my residuary estate [or, the sum of _____ Dollars (\$_____)] to The Dental Foundation of North Carolina, Inc. (the "Foundation"), located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for the unrestricted needs of the UNC Department of Pediatric Dentistry, or to establish 'The _____ Fellowship Fund in Pediatric Dentistry.' The Board of Directors of the Foundation shall treat this bequest as part of its endowment, and the income paid out of the Fund shall provide fellowship funding to the department's residents."

GIFT AND PLEDGE CARD



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☐ New address?

Name: _____

Class Year: _____

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☐ Yes! I want to make a gift of \$_____ to the Dental Foundation of North Carolina to support graduate education in pediatric dentistry at UNC.

☐ I prefer to make my gift in payments of \$_____ ☐ monthly ☐ quarterly ☐ annually for _____ years.

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For more information on the Dental Foundation of North Carolina or giving to the UNC School of Dentistry, please call 919-537-3257.



ALUMNI NEWS

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

Adams School of Dentistry
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7450

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH YOU?

This *Newsletter* goes to more than 350 of our program alumni and friends. We get many comments on how much everyone enjoys keeping up with friends and events through the *Newsletter* grapevine. But we need you to let us know what is going on in your lives so we can share. Please use this page to pass on news to us that we can include in our next publication! Also, pictures are greatly appreciated.

Please send us personal or professional news that may be of interest to alumni and friends of UNC-CH Pediatric Dentistry.

Name _____

Year of program completion _____

E-Mail Address _____

Send to: Elyse Crawford - Pediatric Dentistry CB #7450 - Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7450

Email Address: elysemc@unc.edu

News of interest:

Thanks!