



ALUMNI NEWS

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Chairs Message: Honoring Our Legacy, Building Our Future



Greetings from Chapel Hill! As I step into this role, I am deeply honored and humbled to serve our department. Daily, I remind myself that our focus is on our people: our dedicated team here in Chapel Hill and all of you—our alumni and friends.

I want to begin by acknowledging the incredible contributions of my predecessor, **Jessica Lee**, who served admirably as Chair for the past ten years. Her visionary leadership and dedication have been instrumental in shaping our department and continuing our proud Carolina tradition. Jessica, a renowned clinician-scientist and recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE)—the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers early in their careers and past president of the AAPD—has transitioned to a Senior Associate Dean position for Faculty Development at the Adams School of Dentistry and remains a valued faculty member, actively engaged in our department—we know where to find her (and if not, Grayson does!).

We stand on the shoulders of giants. The dedication and vision of all previous department chairs laid the groundwork for our success. Their contributions, though not always visible in daily operations, have always been present and ready to provide support, guide, and mentor us, fostering a continuous legacy of excellence. Leaders such as our school's first Dean, **John Brauer**, who was also a founder and early president of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (ABPD) and past president of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD); **Willie Demeritt**, whose pioneering leadership set the initial course for the department, laying crucial groundwork for its

future growth and excellence; **Roy Lindahl**, a past president of the AAPD and ABPD, who pioneered pediatric dentistry training in North Carolina from 1955-1968 and whose residents went on to lead departments and even become deans; **Ted Oldenburg**, a past president of the AAPD and ABPD; **Bill Vann**, a past president of the AAPD, a true luminary who has served for 42 years and continues to educate and lead our development program; **Mike Roberts**, a past president of the ABPD, an inspirational leader who tirelessly built and continues to guide our hospital dentistry program and significantly grew our endowment; and **Tim Wright**, past president of the American Association for Dental Research, the epitome a clinician-scientist whose contributions extend significantly across leadership, education, and research at a world-class level, have all left an indelible mark on our department and the specialty.

This is truly a team effort, and I am incredibly proud to be part of it. I extend my deepest gratitude to all our staff, clinical and administrative, for consistently going above and beyond to deliver excellent patient care, provide world-class education, and maintain seamless operations. To our faculty and residents, thank you for your unwavering commitment and unmatched team mentality, the cornerstones of our success. And to our alumni, you are our extended family; your engagement and support are vital to our strength.

We must recognize and never forget that the successes we enjoy today were planted as seeds decades ago. This is evident in our robust development program, which allows us to remain focused on our mission, even in turbulent times. This support is crucial for ensuring competitive stipends for our residents and supporting our growth. It is also true of groundbreaking initiatives like our autotransplantation program. Thanks to the vision of **John Christensen**, **Sonny Long**, **Jessica Lee**, and many others, this has developed into a robust program that is meeting unmet clinical needs while embracing education and research in an exemplary interdisciplinary manner. The team recently celebrated our 100th autotransplantation case—a testament to this long-term vision.

Our department's enduring strength is our ability to navigate smooth leadership transitions and continuously build upon the solid foundation we have collectively established. You are all part of this journey, and we want to continue hearing from you!

Our team is growing! In the spring, we welcomed two new faculty members. **Halley White** joined our Pediatric Dentistry team on April 1st as Clinical Associate Professor, and **Gloria Mejia** joined our Dental Public Health team on May 19th also as Clinical Associate Professor. We also welcomed 3 new clinical staff teammates, **Haomiao Jiang**, **Porsha Covington-Tate**, and **Muram Suliman**, and 5 new research staff members, **Maria Tsamatropoulou**, **Patience Beth-Israel**, **Sara La Lone**, **Kevin Nguyen**, and **Eric Trevino**.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, which features updates from our incredible alumni and our dedicated Chapel Hill team. As we look forward, please save the date for our **Fall CE course** and for the special events we are planning to celebrate the **75th Anniversary of UNC Pediatric Dentistry** in 2026!

“Current Concepts in TMD/orofacial Pain and Fear Management”

Cristina Perez, DDS, MS
Cameron L. Randall, MS, PhD

October 10, 2025

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!

Continuing Education

Friday, April 14, 2025, brought us another outstanding, stimulating and engaging CE course titled “Oral Medicine in the Pediatric Patient: From A to Z (including X-ray)”. We again offered the course in a hybrid format that included an on-site speaker and by Zoom. We had 53 participants at the Friday Conference Center in Chapel Hill and an additional 75 participants who tuned in by Zoom to hear the course presented by Juan F. Yepes, DDS, MD, MPH, MS, DrPH, professor and associate dean for graduate education in the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at Indiana University School of Dentistry.

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 2025

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 Conference Center in Chapel Hill plus by Zoom. The registration process will similar to past courses.

FYI! There is not a UNC home football game this weekend but the NC Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Annual Business Session is scheduled to be held the following morning (October 11, 2025) at the Rizzo Center in Chapel Hill. So, plan accordingly.

October 10, 2025 (8:30 AM-4:30 PM)

“Current Concepts in TMD/orofacial Pain and Fear Management”

Temporomandibular dysfunction (TMD) and orofacial pain in children and adolescents can be challenging issues for dental providers. Beyond making the correct diagnosis, providing the most appropriate and effective treatment can be complex. The speakers in this course will address these health issues and offer insights into the clinical presentation and therapeutic options, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological with emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach. Understanding the psychological implications and source of pain among children and adolescents will be highlighted as it impacts the success of treatment strategies.

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

Speakers: Cristina Perez, DDS, MS
Associate Professor
Division Chief, Pediatric Dentistry
Director, Pediatric Dental Residency Program
University of Kentucky College of Dentistry
Lexington KY
Cameron L. Randall, MS, PhD
Assistant Professor and Clinical Psychologist
Department of Oral Health Sciences
University of Washington School of Dentistry
Seattle, WA

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

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

The course provides 6 hours of CE credit.

* 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: www.dentistry.unc.edu/ce/cde/courses.

USASP Annual Meeting and Pain Research

Caroline Sawicki recently attended the 2025 Annual Meeting of the United States Association for the Study of Pain (USASP), held in Chicago, Illinois. This interdisciplinary conference brought together researchers, clinicians, and trainees from across the country to share new discoveries and foster collaboration in the field of pain science. The theme of the meeting, “Advancing Pain Research: Innovations to Enhance Care”, was reflected in a robust program of plenary sessions, symposia, and poster presentations spanning topics from neuroimmune mechanisms and sleep-pain interactions to large-scale data integration, artificial intelligence, and patient-centered clinical trials. A key takeaway was the strong enthusiasm for orofacial pain research, with growing interest in temporomandibular disorders (TMD), headache, and nociplastic mechanisms. This momentum reflects a broader shift toward integrating orofacial pain into mainstream pain research and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

Caroline was honored to present her work, "Characterizing Temporomandibular Disorder Pain in Adolescents", which examined psychosocial and symptom-related correlates of TMD pain in youth. This study highlighted the impact of co-occurring headache and stress on pain burden, offering insight into phenotypic variability that may inform future precision-based approaches to care. As the only dentist at the conference, she was especially encouraged by the strong interest and support from across disciplines. In response to this enthusiasm, USASP is launching a new Orofacial Pain Special Interest Group (SIG), which Caroline will be leading as Chair. This SIG will serve as a platform to foster collaboration, advocate for research funding, and advance integrative approaches to orofacial pain across the lifespan.

Sawicki receives research awards

We have great news to share—**Caroline Sawicki** has won the UNC ASOD 2025 Class of 1958 Distinguished Clinical Research Award for her outstanding research and manuscript "Preoperative Multisensory Room Use in Pediatric Patients with Autism: A Randomized Clinical Trial" published in *Pediatric Dentistry* (Pediatr Dent 2024;46(2):91-98). Receipt of this long-standing, meritorious clinical research award is a well-deserved honor for Caroline. The award comes with a monetary prize and recognition at the annual ASOD Best of Dentistry Dinner celebration in September. Earlier this year, it was announced that Caroline was also the recipient of the 2025 Holiday Dental Conference Clinical Research Award.

We're all incredibly proud of Caroline's achievements and are delighted that she is a member of our department's faculty, *congratulations!*

News

Welcome to Our New Faculty Member: Dr. Halley White



We are delighted to welcome **Halley White (2006)** to our team in the Department of Pediatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health. Halley is a distinguished pediatric dentist with a wealth of clinical experience gained through both private practice and hospital settings.

Halley returns to UNC as a Clinical Associate Professor, bringing her passion for academic mentorship and clinical excellence. A two-time graduate of UNC, she earned her DDS in 2003 and completed both her residency and MPH in 2006. During her residency, she was among the first students to complete an MPH under the mentorship of Gary Rozier and Jessica Lee, focusing her research on improving access to care and the use of general anesthesia in pediatric dentistry.

Her love for the hospital environment—developed during her residency—has strongly shaped her career. Halley held key voluntary leadership roles at Novant New Hanover Regional Medical Center and Onslow Memorial Hospital, consistently advocating for pediatric dentistry within hospital systems.

After 18 successful years in private practice where she dedicated her career to providing exceptional dental care to children and adolescents, with a particular focus on those with special health care needs, she has returned to academia seeking fresh opportunities for personal and professional growth. Halley is thrilled to rejoin UNC, reconnect with mentors such as Mike Roberts, Bill Vann, Jessica Lee, Rocio Quiñonez, and John Christensen, and contribute to a vibrant and innovative teaching environment.

Outside the dental field, Halley channels her creativity into real estate, design, and cooking. She and her husband, John Grooman, along with their three daughters, have settled in Pittsboro and are enjoying the diverse cultural and recreational offerings of the Triangle area.

Please join us in warmly welcoming Halley White back to UNC!



Above photo: Halley, husband, John, and daughter, Amory, celebrating cousin's wedding in Park City



Jenny Jackson (2007) reported that although their area was ravaged during the storm last fall, it's so resilient with tough and loving people. Asheville is back welcoming visitors, with even many of her favorites in Biltmore Village open again with lovely renovations. She felt blessed to have only been closed for a week with no damage to her office. While her home and property had damage, it's repaired and they are appreciating the new beauty of the area. She thanked so many of you checking on them.

Professionally, she had the opportunity to speak at the AAPD meeting in Denver this year about a subject she feels passionate about: laser dentistry. She has been using the Solea laser since 2020 and has seen so many benefits both clinically and in efficiency that she feels fortunate to have been asked to be a Key Opinion Leader (KOL) and one of the company's Clinical Advisory Board Members. This year she will also be again speak at the annual Solea Summit, presenting two new classes: Advanced Surgical Procedures in the Pediatric Practice and Advanced Hard Tissue Procedures.

News of Alumni and Friends

News from Elizabeth Shick, a UNC dental school class of 2002 and UNC Pediatric Dentistry class of 2005:

Elizabeth is Associate Professor at the University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine where she has been since 2009. She is currently serving as the president of the Southwestern Society of Pediatric Dentistry. Last year she received a nomination from the American Dental Association to serve on their expert committee on global health leading to her becoming elected onto the FDI- World Dental Federation's Public Health Committee. She received an ADA grant to collaborate with FDI to create an online global oral health course. This free, open-access course can be found here: www.fdiworldddental.org/new-online-course-addresses-global-challenges-and-opportunities-improve-oral-health

Elizabeth was recently awarded the prestigious U.S. Fulbright Scholarship for Teaching and Research and will spend her time at Karolinska Institute Department of Pediatric Dentistry in Stockholm, Sweden. Her project titled: "Prevalence of oral diseases in children and adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus – a registry based epidemiologic study," will investigate the oral health status of Swedish children with Type 1 Diabetes using several Swedish national health registries. The implications of this study will be useful globally when considering treatment regimens and developing health policy.

Kavita Mathu-Muju (2006) shared that she is enjoying her time as a mother of a teenager! Sunaya is now 16 years of age and driving with her learner's permit. Sadly, though Kavita's mother passed away this past year. There is good news on the professional front, however, as she been appointed as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs (Academic Dean) effective July 1, 2025, for the Faculty of Dentistry, University of British Columbia. Kavita acknowledges that the role will bring new challenges but she is looking forward to it and feels well prepared from her education days at UNC-CH and previous faculty experiences.

Burton Horwitz of Raleigh has received the **Order of the Long Leaf Pine**, an award bestowed on individuals who have shown extraordinary service to North Carolina. The highest honor for state service, the award is granted by the Office of the Governor.

A native of Raleigh, Burton attended college and dental school at Carolina before serving in the USAF and completing a residency in pediatric dentistry at Indiana University and Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis. He opened a private practice in Raleigh in 1966, and served the community in full-time practice until his retirement at age 86 in 2024.

Burton has a long and distinguished history of service in the Raleigh community as a practitioner and as a state level policy advisor/leader for both the state's HeadStart and Medicaid Programs. He has been a long-time leader in leading dental mission to Moldova and a leader in his Jewish faith at Beth Meyr Synagogue in Raleigh. He has no close competition as the longest serving Adjunct Faculty member at UNC-CH Pediatric Dentistry!

Burton was one of 10 founding members of the North Carolina Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. He served two terms as Secretary-Treasurer and as President 1975-76. In 2020, he received the NCPD Health Service Award. CONGRATULATIONS to Burton, and many thanks for your contributions to our profession and to mankind!

News of Alumni and Friends

At the Boston Marathon in April, **Erica Brecher (2016)** of Durham was one of four featured panelists at the Boston Marathon '25 EXPO Program "Motherhood and Marathonning". The other speakers (left to right on the program image) were Paula Radcliffe, Sara Vaughn, Kaitlin Goodman, and Erica, far right.

Radcliffe, a mother of two, is a British former distance runner who held the Women's World Marathon Record with a time of 2:15:25 for 16 years from 2003-19. Vaughn, a mother of four, was the top American at the 2024 New York Marathon. Goodman (a two-year old son) is a four-time Olympic Trials Qualifier (5,000 meters, 10,000 meters, marathon twice), and a former Team USA member.

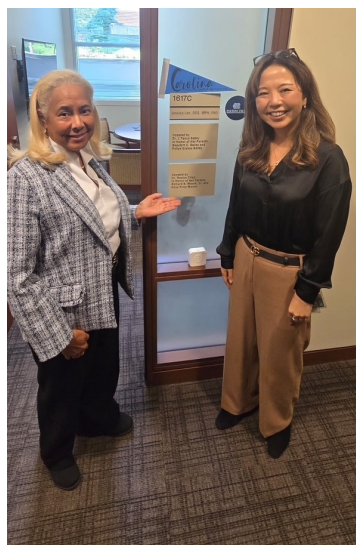
Our own Erica is the mother of Leah (19 months) and Sarah (age 4). She has run Boston eight times and has also completed marathons in NY, Berlin, and London. Her personal best time is 2:59 in the Chicago Marathon. If one reads the bio-sketches of the ladies joining Erica on the panel, it is apparent all are professional runners or running coaches, while Erica is a **full-time practicing pediatric dentist**. GO ERICA!



Above photo: **Erica Brecher (2016)** with Leah and Sarah in the '24 "Running of the Bulls" in Durham



Above photo: **Erica Brecher (2016)** with spouse Brad and kids during the '24 "Four on the Fourth" in Chapel Hill



Keeping it in the Carolina Pediatric Dentistry family—Roslyn Crisp (1986), proud UNC Pediatric Dentistry alum, sponsors an administrative office in the Dean's Suite to honor her parents now occupied by fellow alum Jessica Lee (2002), Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development.

News of Alumni and Friends



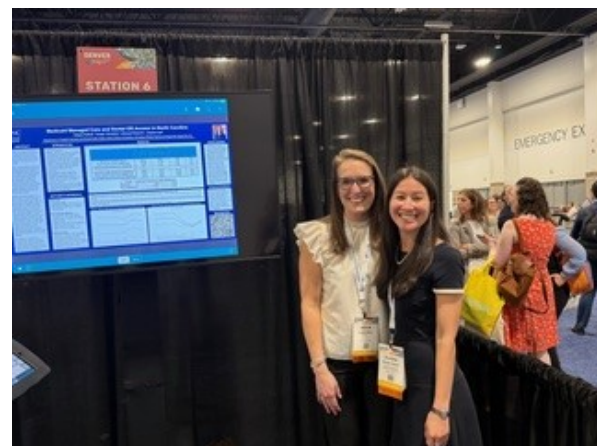
Left photo: Alums enjoy networking at the Southeastern Society meeting in Atlanta in January '25. Left to right are **Martha Hardaway (2005)** of Boone, **Anne Baker (2019)** of Raleigh, **Meredith Davis (2021)** of Greenville, **Angie Baechtold (1998)** of Asheville/Wilmington, and **Scott Cashion (1997)** of Greensboro/Chapel Hill. No doubt the celebration was in honor of **Angie's** SESPDP Presidential Year '25. Big congrats Angie!



Left photo: Close buddies **Jennier Crisp (2020)** on the left of Burlington and **Anne Baker (2019)** of Raleigh enjoy reuniting at the January '25 Meeting of the Southeastern Society of Pediatric Dentistry in Atlanta. Left out of the conversation on the left is Jen's spouse, **Alex Crisp**, an oral & maxillofacial surgeon in Burlington and Raleigh. Coincidentally, **Alex** is the son of **Roslyn Crisp (1986)** of Burlington, recent President of the North Carolina Dental Society.



Left photo: Pictured here is the **Pang/Lee Family of San Francisco**, celebrating the occasion of **Johnathn Lee's** recent graduation from dental school at Roseman University College of Dental Medicine in Jordon, Utah. Left to right in the photo are **Peter Lee (UNC Ortho 1992)**, **Dorothy Pang (1991)**, son **Johnathan**, the proud graduate, and son **Ben Lee** of Chapel Hill, a third year DDS Student at Adam's School of Dentistry.



Above photo: A proud moment for UNC Pediatric Dentistry—faculty, residents, alumni, and friends gathered at the AAPD meeting to cheer on Caitlin Miller and Allegra Nottoli as they shared their research with the pediatric dentistry community

News

News Ivy Brisbin, UNC Pediatric Dentistry class of 2019:



Ivy Brisbin (2019) is in her sixth year of practice at Mebane Pediatric Dentistry and loves helping the kids of Alamance County alongside UNC Peds Alumna **Jina Yoo (2011)**. She has also been an attending in the UNC DDS clinic on Fridays since graduating residency and is passionate about teaching dental students pediatric dentistry fundamentals. It is quite thrilling to see a spark of interest lit in a dental student who wants to pursue pediatric dentistry, but also just as rewarding to engage with a student aimed at becoming a well-rounded general dentist and helping them learn to feel comfortable with pediatric patients and knowing when to refer to a specialist.

On a personal update, Ivy became engaged to her fiancé, Matt, who currently is working in Madison, WI. They met through church while both were grad students at UNC. Ivy is still at that same church, Summit Church, and has been serving in the preschool ministry there since 2016. In spring/summer, she plays in the Durham Softball league; in the colder months, she curls with Lorne Koroluk at the Triangle Curling Club. They have curled together for 5 seasons now, and their team won the Fall 2024 Friday league! She would love to introduce anybody to the sport of curling, so please ask her about it- the next winter Olympics are less than a year away!



AJ Ginnis to be first torchbearer

The first torchbearer for the upcoming **Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026** will be Greece's top Alpine skier **AJ Ginnis**. AJ is the son of our faculty member, Jeannie Ginnis. In 2021 he became the first Alpine skier representing Greece to earn FIS Alpine World Cup points, and was selected by the Hellenic Olympic Committee, Greece's national Olympic committee.

"It's a great honor for me, something I never imagined as a child," Ginnis said.

AJ grew up in Greece before moving to the United States at age 16. From 2014 to 2020, he raced for the U.S. on the World Cup as well as at the 2017 Alpine World Ski Championships and 2015 Junior World Championships. After switching back to represent his country of birth in 2020, Ginnis scored Greece's first World Cup points in January 2021 in a slalom race in Flachau, Austria. Two years later, he earned a World Cup podium by finishing second in the Chamonix slalom before going on to win World Championships slalom silver in Courchevel. However, Ginnis missed nearly the entirety of the 2024/25 season due to injury, having taken part in just two races at the start of the season. The Milano Cortina 2026 Torch Relay begins in Greece with the traditional Flame Lighting Ceremony in Ancient Olympia on 26 November, which is followed by a relay around Greece. Ginnis will be the first torchbearer once the torch is lit in the ceremony. Italy will receive the Olympic Flame and the torch in a handover ceremony in Athens on 4 December, from where the torch will make its way to Rome on 6 December for the Italian leg of the Torch Relay.

The Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 will take place at the Milano San Siro Olympic Stadium on February 6, 2026.

AAPD Meeting: Denver, CO



News

The 75th Anniversary of UNC Pediatric Dentistry is Just Around the Corner!

As many of you are aware, this year the Adams School of Dentistry is celebrating its 75th Anniversary. This is a sentinel milestone in the life of any academic institution. What you may not be aware of is that our department was founded in 1951. Therefore, 2026 will be the year we celebrate our Diamond Anniversary.

Throughout 2026, in this *Newsletter* and in additional sources, we will share historical information and details on *how our department came to be*. We will review with admiration and pride all the visionaries who inspired our earliest organizational development and set the stage for our colorful and successful history.

We hope you will look forward to accounts of the formative years of the department's history beginning with the 1951 inauguration. The story of the admission and education of the first graduate student, who became the first UNC-trained pediatric dentist in 1957, is not to be missed. He was a much beloved **character for sure!**

Fifteen alumni (14 males, 1 female) are no longer with us. When the current cohort of 2025 competes the program this June, we will have 155 living alumni (79 males, 76 females). We look forward to the celebration of our shared alumni kinship and history throughout 2026.

Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Fund (JYLF)—Hits the Road Running!

The Pediatric Dentistry Departmental Steering Committee (DSC) is a group of alumni and friends of the department who have been meeting annually in the fall for the past decade under the leadership of **Bryan Cobb (1979)** of Greensboro and **Jim Congleton (1977)** of New Bern to advise and guide the department's development initiatives. In the fall of '23, the group assembled to hear two exciting announcements: the first was the goal of the Tim Wright Fellowship was near at hand and the second was a new development initiative that would be undertaken to establish a fellowship to honor Jessica Y. Lee. Considering Jessica's previously announced intent to step down January '25 as chair after 10½ years, the timing of the new JYL Fellowship Fund was propitious.

Dorothy Pang (1991) of San Francisco and **Mike Ignelzi (1992)** of Greensboro were announced as co-chairs of the initiative and were charged to assemble a Steering Committee over the next year—a time when the JYLF would be in an *active but silent phase* of fundraising. The initiative remained in a silent phase from October '23 until the public announcement in October '24. During this silent phase, \$200K in five-year pledges was accumulated from DSC members: one for \$50K, another for \$25K, another for \$20K, and several for \$10K. The collective faculty made a pledge of \$100K during the silent phase.

Next, Dorothy and Mike went to work! Between October '24 and October '25, they assembled and energized the JYLF Steering Committee. Beginning early this year, the Steering Committee got into gear and of June '25, they have accumulated over \$108,000 in gifts and almost \$370,000 in pledges, for a total over \$480,000 for the Fund. The Steering Committee continues to actively engage with donors—and now is the time to join in if you haven't yet. Every contribution brings us closer to our goal.

Additional details for your information: the JYLF Initiative will span from 2025-29. The fundraising goal is \$700,000. All endowment proceeds will be used to enhance residents' stipends.

A copy of the JYLF Prospectus is included in this *Newsletter* for your perusal. While Jessica was the Graduate Program Director (GPD), she saw how directly impactful raising stipends could be in competing for and supporting pediatric dental residents. In addition to her tenure as GPD and Chair, she has given back to the wider pediatric dental community by serving as a board member and President of the NCAPD as well as a Board member and President of the AAPD. She remains an active faculty member in pediatric dentistry at the Adams School of Dentistry serving as the Demeritt Distinguished Professor of Pediatric Dentistry as well as in her new role as the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development.

Here is the **good news**—we've raised \$480,000 for JYLF Fund and we're only eight months into the active phase of this campaign. That puts us well over halfway to our goal of \$700,000. Here's even **better news**—our incredible progress has come from only 38 alumni. We have 155 living alumni, so let us step-up to support the person who supported you as a dental students, residents, and colleagues—please join us by making a pledge today to the Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship.

News

New fund announced in the Department- Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Fund

Jessica Y. Lee joined the UNC Department of Pediatric Dentistry in 2002 following completion of a PhD in Health Policy and Management at the Gillings School of Public Health and a Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry. The breadth of her training and early career tenure was supported by a variety of federal agencies for her nationally recognized studies focused on oral health disparities in children. The impact of her work was amplified in 2010 when she was awarded the US Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from President Barack Obama.

In addition to research and addressing oral health disparities in children, her real passion has been training the next generation of public health advocates and pediatric dentists. She was an investigator on the NIH Training Program for the Next Generation of Oral Health Researchers (NextGen) and became the pediatric dentistry graduate program director in 2012. She was named William Demeritt Distinguished Professor of Pediatric Dentistry in 2012, and Chair in 2014. A most notable role in Jessica's tenure at UNC has been her mentoring of dental students, residents and faculty. She has mentored over 50 DDS, MS, MPH and PhD students, 19 of whom are graduates from the combined pediatric dentistry and public health program. As a result, Jessica has been instrumental in establishing UNC as a leader in child health advocacy.

Jessica has been active in the leadership in NC and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). She served as a board member and as president of the North Carolina Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. She was an inaugural Advisory Board Member of the AAPD Research and Policy Center and served eight years on the AAPD Board of Trustees. In 2020, she served as the AAPD national president and led the organization and its 10,000 members through a major pandemic with compassion and care.

An active clinician, she is a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and a member of the medical staff at the UNC Hospitals. She is also a Professor of Health Policy and Management and is the recipient of numerous teaching and research awards including the 2008 AAPD Jerome Miller "For the Kids" Award and the AAPD's Merle Hunter Leadership Award in 2021. In 2011, she was named the AAPD's national "Pediatric Dentist of the Year."

To honor Jessica's contributions to pediatric dental education in North Carolina and nationally, UNC has established a permanent endowment fund in her name in the Dental Foundation of North Carolina. The proceeds from the Jessica Y. Lee (JYL) Fellowship Fund will go exclusively to supplement the stipends of the pediatric dentistry residents and will serve as a continuation of her legacy in supporting and mentoring future pediatric dentists. For those who wish to contribute to the JYL Fellowship Fund, please send donations to the Dental Foundation of North Carolina, earmarked for the Jessica Y. Lee (JYL) Fellowship Fund – fund number 202503. To donate on-line, go to go.unc.edu/Lee Questions? Contact Sarah Huppert at the DNFC at (919) 537-3259 or huppert@unc.edu.

Jessica Y. Lee Fellowship Steering Committee (JYLF SC)

The JYLF SC is referenced in other pieces in this [Newsletter](#). Chaired by **Dorothy Pang (1991)** of San Francisco and **Mike Ignelzi (1992)** of Greensboro, this august group has been busy since October '24 seeking donations for the fund. The goal is \$700,000 over 2025-29. Their progress after only eight months is amazing!

JYL SC members are **Christopher Adams ('23)** of Austin, TX, **Jenny Alvy ('16)** of Cary, **Anne Baker ('19)** of Raleigh, **Jeannie Beauchamp (UT alum)** of Clarkesville, TN, **Tom Bouwens ('07)** of Zeeland, MI, **Antonio Braithwaite ('08)** of Sanford, **Ivy Brisbin ('19)** of Mebane, **Gentry Byrd ('18)** of Durham, **Bob Cherry ('11)** of Wilmington, **Jennifer Crisp ('20)** of Burlington, **Meredith Davis ('21)** of Greenville, **Jenny Jackson ('07)** of Asheville, **Stephanie Jackson ('10)** of Fort Mill, SC, **Elizabeth Miller ('10)** of Rocky Mount, **Jordon Olsen ('13)** of Fayetteville, **Bhavna Pahel ('17)** of Rock Hill, SC, **Raphael Riveria (UNC DDS Alumni)** of Gastonia, **Sandy Roberts** of Chapel Hill, **Michael Rossitch ('04)** of Marietta, GA, **Poojan Shrestha ('23)** of Chapel Hill, **Gina Spangler ('96)** of Winston Salem, and **Maria Wang ('05)** RTP.

Please respond with generously with your support when contacted by these colleagues!

News from the DDS Program!



We had an exciting Spring semester! In early February we had our Give Kids A Smile Day where we served more than 150 patients and families—we had lots of fun! Our 2025 GKAS Chairs did an *amazing* job organizing this year's event! From left to right in the photo our 2025 GKAS Chairs: Amrit Saini, Yamini Pandrapagada, Ysabella Gallo, Ben Lee, Claribeth Umana, Shalini Sharma, and Anna Zheng—all of them DDS candidates of the class of 2026.

All our graduating dental students completed their intramural rotations in pediatric dentistry and our Senior dental students *excelled* in their clinical experiences in pediatric dentistry. Congratulations to the DDS Class of 2025! We are extremely grateful for all their leadership and service to our patient population, not only in our clinic but also at the Durham County Health Department (DCHD).

The AAPD Certificate of Merit Award recognizes the extraordinary trajectory of one of our graduating dental students throughout their dental training. This year, we received several nominations, and the award was presented to Molina Shah! Molina is an *outstanding* graduate from the class of 2025 with substantial contributions in research in the field of pediatric dentistry (Mentor: Kimon Divaris). Molina will continue her pediatric dentistry training at Columbia University in the City of New York! We wish all the best to Molina, and we hope to see her back soon in N.C.!

Miguel Simancas presented the award to Molina during the 2025 DDS Surgeon Banquet.



A Landmark Achievement: UNC Pediatric Dentistry Performs 100th autotransplantation

UNC Pediatric Dentistry is proud to announce a significant milestone: the successful completion of our 100th tooth autotransplantation surgery. This achievement underscores our department's role as a leader in this innovative clinical procedure, which provides a natural, long-term, often life-changing solution for young patients with missing or nonviable teeth. The autotransplantation team's continued success is a testament to the powerful collaboration between our faculty, residents, and esteemed international partners.

In late May, we celebrated this momentum with a special virtual shadowing event, showcasing an autotransplantation surgery livestreamed from our clinic. Coordinated by Lamont Lowery, the event highlighted the combined talents of our own John Christensen, Antonio Moretti, Jacklyn Smollett, Bethany Doolittle, and visiting surgeon Dick Barendregt.

The team guided a global audience of over 500 attendees through the transplantation of mandibular premolars into the space of maxillary central incisors. The event not only showcased the high level of skill and innovation within our clinic but also reinforced our commitment to advancing world-class dental education and clinical research opportunities.

We are immensely grateful for the ongoing support of our alumni, which is vital in empowering UNC to remain at the forefront of pediatric dental care.



Global Health in Action: Reflections from Oxford and Bristol

This spring, **Poojan Shrestha (2023)** had the privilege of returning to the University of Oxford in England to celebrate 10-years of the MSc in International Health and Tropical Medicine (IHTM) course, followed by a collaborative visit to the Bristol Dental School at the University of Bristol. These experiences offered a powerful reminder of how global health is shaped not only by innovation and research but also by enduring partnerships and shared purpose.

A Decade of IHTM: Shaping the Future of Global Health

Held at the historic Rhodes House, the IHTM reunion brought together alumni, faculty, and global health leaders to reflect on a decade of impact and envision the future. The event opened with a keynote by Professor Sarah Gilbert of the Jenner Institute, who led the development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. Her talk on future vaccine preparedness was a poignant reminder of how science, when mobilized swiftly and collaboratively, can save millions of lives. Indeed, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is estimated to have saved over six million lives in its first year alone. Its low cost, ease of storage, and non-profit pricing during the pandemic, made it especially accessible to low- and middle-income countries.

The conference featured a rich program of panels and discussions, including sessions on digital health, AI, governance, and leadership. A particularly inspiring segment was the “Alumni Impact Stories,” where graduates shared how they are transforming health systems across the globe. These stories underscored the global reach of the IHTM program and the importance of investing in people who drive change in their communities. Amid discussions on the shifting global health funding landscapes, there was a strong sense of optimism. New networks are forming, and global health solidarity remains a guiding principle. The reunion was not just a celebration—it was a reaffirmation of our collective commitment to health equity and innovation.

Rekindling Connections and Purpose

Beyond the formal sessions, one of the most meaningful aspects of the reunion was reconnecting with friends, colleagues, and mentors from the IHTM course. After a decade apart, the warmth of these reunions and the depth of our shared experiences reignited the spirit that first drew us to global health. Conversations flowed easily—about their journeys, challenges, and the impact each make in their respective roles.

These exchanges were more than nostalgic—they were invigorating. Hearing how his peers have grown into leaders, innovators, and advocates reminded him of the power of the IHTM community. It was a moment of reflection and renewal, where the passion and purpose that defined our time at Oxford were rekindled. He left feeling re-energized, inspired by the collective momentum of this global network, and more committed to advancing health equity through collaboration and research.

Collaboration in Action: Bristol and Beyond

Following the reunion, Poojan visited the Bristol Dental School to explore collaborative research opportunities. Working with Dr. Simon Haworth and his team, who are advancing efforts to harmonize phenotypes of common oral diseases like dental caries and periodontitis. This work is foundational for conducting genome-wide meta-analyses across diverse populations, enhancing our ability to detect genetic signals and improve risk stratification for these conditions. Ultimately, this research supports the development of precision dentistry—tailoring care to individual risk profiles and improving outcomes globally.

Poojan also had the opportunity to meet with the Cleft Collective team, whose work on cleft lip and palate research presents exciting avenues for collaboration. By integrating genetic, clinical, and environmental data, we can better understand the etiology and outcomes of these conditions and improve care for affected populations worldwide.

Looking Ahead

These experiences reaffirmed that global health is not confined to borders—it thrives on collaboration, shared knowledge, and mutual respect. Whether through vaccine development, health systems strengthening, or genomics in oral health, the work we do is interconnected. The partnerships we build today will shape the health of tomorrow’s populations.

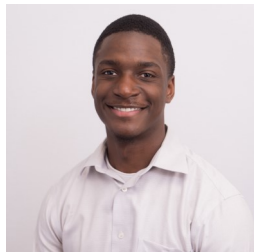
As we look to the future, let us continue to foster these collaborations, champion innovation, and remain steadfast in our commitment to cutting-edge research and global health equity.



Residents' Corner

RESIDENCY BEGINS FOR OSAGIE, PARKER, & VALENTINA

Welcome to the UNC Pediatric Dentistry Family! On July 1, **Osagie Ekue, Parker Norman and Valentina Roa** started in our program! We are so glad to have them join us and can't wait for all our alumni to meet them. All three are ready to hit the ground running and are emersed in orientation activities! As they begin their time with us, they, like is said to everyone, should use this time to "drink deep from the Well". So, who are they?



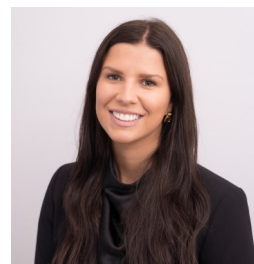
Osagie Ekue is a native of South Carolina and grew up in the suburbs of Columbia. He earned his BS degree in biology from Howard University. Osagie received his DDS degree this past June from the University of California-San Francisco. He has earned many honors and awards throughout college and dental school. In addition, Osagie has been a leader and got to teach while in dental school. He served as a student delegate to the California Dental Association. Osagie will be pursuing a MPH and a Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry.

Fun Fact: Osagie just got engaged and his fiancée is finishing nursing school.



Parker Norman is a native of North Carolina and grew up in the Mooresville area. She received her BS degree in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned her DMD degree this past May from the University of Pennsylvania. She has held numerous leadership positions both at Penn and UNC. Parker was Speaker of the House for the American Student Dental Association. In addition, she has received many other honors and awards. Parker will be pursuing a MPH and a Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry.

Fun Fact: While in dental school Parker also got a Master's in Law from the University of Pennsylvania, Carey Law School.



Valentina Roa grew up in Advance, NC (Winston-Salem area) and received her BS degree in health and exercise science from Wake Forest University. She earned her DDS degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill this past May. Valentina has served in many leadership and volunteer positions including director of membership for the American Student Dental Association, District 4. She has received many honors and awards throughout her career. Valentina will be pursuing a MS degree and Certificate in Pediatric Dentistry.

Fun Fact: Her significant other is in medical residency in Charlotte.



Residents' Corner

Residents Update

Monday, June 30 was a big day for Caitlin Miller, Sarah Cook and Allegra Nottoli! It was their last day of residency! These three young pediatric dentists worked hard all three years while here at UNC Pediatric Dentistry. Saying "see you soon" is always bittersweet but we are excited for this next chapter in their careers. They are now and forever a part of the UNC Pediatric Dentistry Family!! Their time here was filled with hard work, a lot of laughs along the way and we celebrated them at the residents' banquet on June 20!

Caitlin will be headed back to Greensboro and will be in private practice at The Greensboro Center for Pediatric Dentistry. **Sarah** will also be in Greensboro and will be in private practice at Piedmont Pediatric Dentistry and a side note Sarah and her husband welcomed a new baby- Alice back in April. **Allegra** is headed back to California and will be in private practice. 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!

Our new third year residents, **Michelle Kim (DDS, Columbia)**, **Jason Lin (DDS, UNC)** and **Kaitlin Wilson (DDS, UNC)** are excited to be entering into their last year of residency. All three have assumed the duties of Chief Resident for the Hospital and Chief Resident for Administration this year. In addition, they have been immersed in their research and will be bringing it all together over the coming months. All three of them have had big life events over the past few months: Katilin and her husband welcomed a new baby- Lucy at the end of May. Michelle got married in June and Jason got engaged in July! What a wonderful time for all three of them!

The new second year residents, **Caylen Davis (DDS, UNC)**, **Samantha Glover (DDS, UNC)** and **Sophia Pankratz (DDS, Nebraska)** 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 Session in Denver. Caylen and her husband just celebrated their one-year anniversary in April, Samantha got engaged in March and Sophia's fiancé finished his pediatric dentistry residency in Iowa and has moved to Chapel Hill. He will be working in Greensboro at Lake Jeanette Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry.

Sending out a big UNC WELCOME to our new first year residents, **Osagie Ekue (DDS, UCSF)**, **Parker Norman (DMD, University of Pennsylvania)** and **Valentina Roa, (DDS, UNC)**. They are featured in another article in the newsletter so be sure to read it to learn a little more about them.

We are so lucky to have such great residents who work so hard each and everyday 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



Sarah Cook: The last few months of residency were great! My husband and I had our daughter, Alice, in April. I also finished up my research project and the MPH program! I can't believe residency is coming to a close - it has been the best three years. After graduation, my family is headed to Greensboro where I will be working in private practice. We are excited to start our next phase, and glad we won't be too far from Chapel Hill!



Allegra Nottoli: The last months of residency have been a blur, but a wonderful one! After graduation, I will be heading back to Los Angeles to work in private practice with an opportunity to occasionally help teach at UCLA. While I am excited to be close to my California friends and family and move into an apartment walking distance to the beach (albeit a very small one), I am going to miss everyone in Chapel Hill, and a part of my heart will always be here.



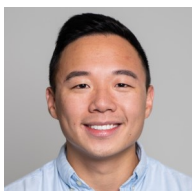
Caitlin Miller: The last months of residency have gone by so fast! These past three years have been incredible, and I will miss everyone so much! My husband Steven, our daughter Holland and I will be moving back to Greensboro and I will be working in private practice. We are excited to start this next chapter and not be too far away from our UNC family!



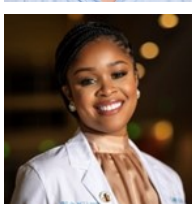
Kaitlin Wilson: Wow, how am I entering my final year of residency?! I had a fulfilling and busy spring and enjoying serving as CRH where I was able to hone in my clinical skills in the OR with our amazing faculty. My husband and I welcomed our first child this May, a daughter named Lucy, and we are so thankful for all the love and support we have received from the UNC Peds Family!



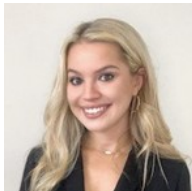
Michelle Kim: I can't believe I'm entering my final year of residency—it's flown by! Second year was fulfilling in its own way, especially as I wrapped up my time serving as both CRH and CRA. I have to say, my time in the OR was my favorite—it was both challenging and rewarding. I also got married on June 1st (best day ever!) and am soaking in every moment of this last chapter before



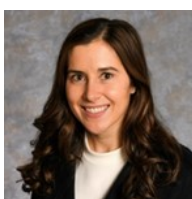
Jason Lin: This past semester, I was able to hit a ton of milestones! I took the remainder of my core classes for the MPH, finished up my sedation experiences, and completed my last weeks of call. Outside of residency, I've still been watching a ton of movies! My recommendations are Sinners, Black Bag, and His Three Daughters. Looking forward to getting to know our incoming first-years (and excited to have another guy!).



Caylen Davis: I can hardly believe my first year of residency is officially over! It's been a year full of growth, learning, and meaningful connections, and I'm so grateful for the journey so far. I'm heading into second year with even more excitement! Outside the clinic, I've been enjoying my pilates classes to stay balanced (pun intended!), and it's been a joy supporting my husband as we lead and grow with our young adults ministry at church. Here's to another great year ahead!

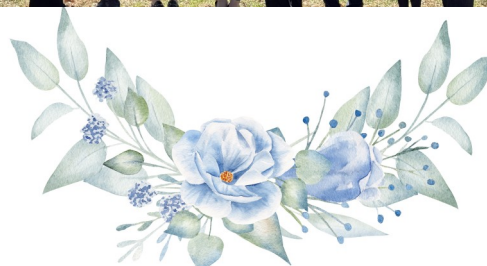


Samantha Glover: It feels so incredibly fast how this entire first year of residency has flown by. From the clinical skills I've gained to the mentorship and support I've received, every moment has contributed to my growth not just as a pediatric dentist, but as a healthcare provider and team member. Outside of our clinic, I got engaged and have spent plenty of time chasing around my two dogs. I am excited to begin working on my MPH in Nutrition starting in August and excited for what the second year has in store!



Sophia Pankratz: As I wrap up my first year living in Chapel Hill, I've truly fallen in love with this town and its incredible community. It's been a rewarding year of growth, both personally and professionally, as I've had the privilege of learning from our outstanding faculty, dedicated co-residents, and generous alumni who continuously share their time and expertise. I'm especially excited to begin the MPH program and look forward to the adventures, challenges, and continued learning that second year will bring! I'm so grateful to be part of the UNC family!

Residents' Corner



Resident Research Updates

Our first-year residents, **Osagie Ekue**, **Parker Norman**, and **Valentina Roa**, are off to a great start. They have begun their orientation in the research component of the program including fundamentals of research project development, led by Poojan Shrestha, our newly-appointed Research Director. They will soon be very busy with taking classes and balancing their busy clinical residency schedules while seeking to solidify plans for their research projects.

Our second-year residents, have been busy making progress with their research projects, preparing drafts and presentations. **Samantha** is working with Caroline Sawicki to evaluate the effects of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in pediatric migraine patients. **Sophia** is working with Jessica Lee to study “Utilization of G0330 in North Carolina Ambulatory Surgical Centers: Increasing Access for Pediatric Medicaid Patients”. **Caylen** is working with Jeannie Ginnis, Kimon Divaris, and Di Wu (Associate Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences) to investigate the occurrence and correlates of natal and neonatal teeth. They will be presenting their research protocols and any research progress updates at an intra-departmental event at the end of August, to maximize feedback from the entire department and enhance our collective learning.

Our third-year residents, **Michelle Kim**, **Jason Lin**, and **Kaitlin Wilson** are nearing the finish line. **Michelle** is working with Poojan Shrestha (chair), Tim Wright, and Peter Duquette (School of Medicine, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) on “A Descriptive Study of Oral Health Among Craniofacial Patients at the University of North Carolina Craniofacial Clinic”. **Jason** is working with Miguel Simancas-Pallares (chair), Jeannie Ginnis and Laura Villa-Torres (Gillings School of Global Public Health, Department of Public Health Leadership and Practice) to study “Influences of Parenting Styles on Behavioral Outcomes of Pediatric Dental Visits”. **Kaitlin** is working with Poojan Shrestha (chair), Kimon Divaris, and Cameron Randall (University of Washington, School of Dentistry) to investigate “Parent Supervised Toothbrushing and Early Childhood Caries”. They will be presenting their research results at the annual ASoD Research Day in March of 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 2024**. Your generous and thoughtful support for the department’s development funds are acknowledged. We express our most sincere **thank you!** Your gifts support our residents’ training, their stipends, improve our graduate student learning center, acquire new technology and provide additional opportunities to enrich the residents’ educational experience. Unfortunately, state and university support continues to be unpredictable and has made your gifts ever more critical.

Gifts are invested and the interest/dividends from the funds are used to meet our graduate program needs as 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. Again, thank you so very much.

\$25,000 plus

Antonio S. Braithwaite and Mary Fox Braithwaite
Michael W. Roberts and Sandra B. Roberts
William F. Vann, Jr.

\$10,000 plus

Stephanie C. Chen and Thomas Arkle III
H. Bryan Cobb and Renea S. Cobb
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Nitsa DuRell Gilbert
Edward M. Miller*
David H. Moore and Pamela Moore

\$5,000 plus

James M. Brittain and Jan G. Brittain
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Eugene F. Howden and Linda M. Howden
Zhengyan (Maria) Wang and Tao Gao
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\$3,000 plus

Martha Ann Keels and Dennis A. Clements III
Bien Wen Pui Lai and Shijia Hu
Gina S. Spangler and R. Victor Spangler III

Generosity of Alumni and Friends *cont...*

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Poojan Shrestha
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Mindy Morgan Turner and Robert T. Turner
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\$1,000 plus

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Scott L. Weinstein
Jina Kang Yoo

\$300 plus

Merry Kay Leithead
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\$200 plus

Chester J. Tyson IV and Susan M. Tyson

\$100 plus

Travis M. Hicks and Courtney L. Hicks
Stephen B. Mackler and Leslie G. Mackler
Deborah Davis Menius
James R. Stone and Barbara H. Stone

Other gifts

Sarah Hatami and Jalal Hatami
Mark S. Morgan and Sandra Sink Morgan

\$20,000 plus to Dental Public Health

Jane A. Weintraub and Christopher S. Barker

Publications

Publications – July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025

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Publications

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