CLOSING THE GAP
Stony Brook sets sights on addressing dentist shortage in New York

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D3 students Nicholas Kagelmacher and Arielle Melendez — aka the Tooth Fairy — provide brushing instructions for a young visitor to Stony Brook University's annual CommUniversity Day.
Dean DelleDonne, DDS '81 (left), and Edward Schlissel, DDS, MS, past chair of Stony Brook’s Department of General Dentistry, reconnect at the School of Dental Medicine’s 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Read more about the event inside.
A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues,

As I look in my rearview mirror, the impact of COVID-19 on our school continues to get smaller and smaller each week, and as I look ahead, the progress we are making and the prosperity our school is experiencing could not be more exciting. Such an image of all that is in front of us is evident on each page of this issue of On the Cusp ™.

Leading the way is a collection of stories about how the SDM has helped and is planning to help counties in New York meet their dental workforce needs. How impressed I was to read the pride one of our graduates, who practices upstate, has about getting to know the families he cares for and the “sturdy jobs” he is able to offer people in is community. And I couldn’t have been more pleased to learn that one of our rising D4s from Western New York “cannot wait to return to the county that raised [him] to serve those who are in need.” These stories tell what our school has done, is doing and should do more of in support of those most in need — all throughout the state.

In keeping with our desire to help reduce the number of Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) and make it more possible that some of our graduates can practice in these areas, two of our own have endowed a scholarship fund for students from HPSAs. What motivated them to make this gift is detailed for your reading and to maybe inspire others to give.

Scattered throughout the magazine are photos and accompanying text that evidence the progress our school is making on all levels. Students, staff, faculty and alumni, who have accomplished much and are making a difference, are featured. You can also see that the events that we have held year after year are now back like they used to be. And just maybe it’ll encourage you, if you’re a class celebrating a milestone year in 2024, to join us for our alumni reunions over Homecoming Weekend.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of On the Cusp ™, and the view ahead, as much as I did.

All the very best,

Patrick M. Lloyd, DDS, MS
Dean, School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook University

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Please take note of our new faculty hires – where they came from, what their expertise is and the kind of experiences they have had. Recruiting such capable and accomplished faculty foretells our success in future acquisitions, helping us add depth to our already strong departments.

If you weren’t able to join us last fall, you’ll find photos and descriptions of our 50th anniversary celebration. There’s likely a classmate, staff member or faculty you might recognize from days gone by. And just maybe it’ll encourage you, if you’re a class celebrating a milestone year in 2024, to join us for our alumni reunions over Homecoming Weekend.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of On the Cusp ™, and the view ahead, as much as I did.

All the very best,

Patrick M. Lloyd, DDS, MS
Dean, School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook University
LaFlair’s Practice is a Go-To Location in Dental HPSA

The plan wasn’t always to return to his hometown of Ogdensburg, New York, but when the time came to make a decision, it just felt right for Chris LaFlair, DDS ’96, and his wife, Tracy, a family physician who graduated from Stony Brook’s medical school.

“We were starting from scratch and ultimately wanted to be back home,” LaFlair said. “And being back with family has been priceless.”

So has the experience of practicing in his hometown. Much like a general store, patients come to LaFlair’s dental practice for just about everything, from cleanings and crowns to fillings and orthodontics. Such is the life of general dentist in a rural community like Ogdensburg, a city of about 10,000 people just across the St. Lawrence River from Ottawa, Ontario.

LaFlair sees pediatric and geriatric patients, and everyone in between. His palette expanded even further when the orthodontist in a neighboring community retired, prompting him to take some continuing education courses in orthodontics, initially with Invisalign and more recently with traditional approaches to orthodontics.

His return to the community was welcomed. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), all of St. Lawrence County is designated as a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area, an area of more than 2,800 square miles.

For LaFlair’s practice, patients often come from households with limited income and resources. He is proud to have built a great rapport with those who he describes as “great, hard-working families,” cultivated relationships that allow for an atmosphere that is both friendly and complete with humor.

“One of the biggest challenges is that a lot of people either don’t have the best insurance or don’t have the means to do really high-end dentistry,” LaFlair said. “On the opposite side of that, being as rural as we are, you don’t have five other dentists on your block competing for patients.”
While much of LaFlair’s clientele hails from in and around town, it’s common to treat patients coming down from Massena, up from Gouverneur, even one who comes over from Syracuse, about two hours away. Patients with special oral surgery, periodontic or endodontic needs must be referred to dentists in Potsdam or Syracuse, for which a patient must allot at least a half-day, if not a full day, on their schedule.

The same applies for special needs patients.

To reach this point in his career, LaFlair trekked well south to Stony Brook, he and his wife preferring country life to cityscapes at other institutions at which they were accepted.

“We really enjoyed our time at Stony Brook,” he said. “Long Island is one big suburb, and when we had the chance, would go to the ocean at Smith Point Park or even Montauk. As a school, it prepared me very well for residency and it’s enabled me to have a great career.”

LaFlair completed his general practice residency at St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center in Syracuse, and then worked in a private practice while his wife finished up her family medicine training. Together, they relocated to Ogdensburg in 1999, from the ground up establishing a building that serves as a healthcare hub of sorts in his community — on one side, medicine; on the other, dental; joining them, a shared reception area. St. Lawrence County is also a primary care medicine HPSA, making it an ideal place to practice for Tracy, who too likes being a vital part of the community she lives in.

What LaFlair has appreciated most about Ogdensburg is getting to care for and know the families who visit him — about 1,500 active patients and treating more than 5,000 since he started. He is also proud to offer sturdy jobs for those in the community, including dental assistants, hygienists and receptionists who have been part of his practice for many years.

Setting in Ogdensburg has also allowed LaFlair to get involved in activities and projects he’s passionate about. When not practicing dentistry, he has been known to drop into his high school to coach track, at which he himself excelled in the shot put and discus, including at the college level at Division III St. Lawrence University. He, his wife and children enjoy outdoor sports both on the water and on their 100-acre property. Their home overlooks the St. Lawrence River and is a perfect fit for them.

“Ogdensburg is just right for us,” LaFlair said. “It’s quiet, it’s mellow, and we get to do the things we enjoy most.”

“We were starting from scratch and ultimately wanted to be back home. And being back with family has been priceless.”

— Chris LaFlair, DDS ‘96
Mother and Son Team Up to Provide Care

Otego County, nestled between the Catskill and Adirondack mountain ranges, has the homey feel that is just right for Kathy Knox, DDS ’03, and her son, Alex Knox, DDS ’17 — to live and to work.

“We just like the slower, more low-key vibe of the area,” said Alex.

Together, they make Otego Family Dental, a two-office practice that provides care for patients in and around Oneonta, New York. It’s well up the road from Manhattan and even from upstate New York’s busier metropolitan areas, making their services all the more important for area citizens.

“It’s humbling,” said Kathy. “Where we are, there aren’t enough doctors; there aren’t enough dentists. A couple of offices have stopped seeing patients, and because of the reputation we have established in this community over the last 14 years, they’ve called us.”

“We strive not only to give quality care but also to respect all of our patients and treat them like family and friends,” Alex added.

Kathy began her career as a dental hygienist, and it wasn’t until 1999 — at age 35 — that she entered dental school, enrolling at Stony Brook. After working at practices in the area for about a decade, she ventured out on her own, opening up an office in Oneonta, a town of about 1,000 people.

In 2018, the opportunity arose to expand the practice to Oneonta — known as “the city” despite its modest population. She seized that opportunity, and had just the right dentist to help. Alex had just finished his general practice residency at New York University Center for Family Dental Medicine in Mineola, and spent a year working in the very dental office that was up for sale.

The rurality does present some challenges however. For specialty care, they must send patients to Binghamton or Utica — a good hour away on most days — or even farther for endodontic procedures in Albany. It becomes even more daunting when wintry weather inevitably arrives in the Mohawk Valley.

Together, though, they have worked to meet the general dentistry needs of their community. They synch their schedules to ensure full coverage for the week, and visit each other’s office depending on who needs what care and when.

For Kathy, it has been a joy to see her son follow in her footsteps, first to Stony Brook and now as a practicing dentist.

“I am so proud when my patients look at me and ask ‘are you Alexander’s mom? I just love your son,’” she said. “It’s been so nice being a mentor, a colleague and also his mom.”

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Third-year student Nicholas Kagelmacher shares what it was like growing up in a Dental Healthcare Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) — and why he looks forward to returning there to practice.

As a child growing up in Niagara County, New York, I was extremely fortunate to attend regular visits at a pediatric dental office. The walls were painted with aquatic landscapes, and “Finding Nemo” played on a small television in the waiting room. My favorite part was the “no cavities” button that would flash and play a song as I walked out into the waiting room after my visit, letting everyone know that I was cavity free. I had similar experiences at the orthodontist, and found myself excited to go to each appointment. These fond memories inspired me to work as an orthodontic assistant during undergrad, and eventually choose a career in dentistry. My goal is to make going to the dentist just as enjoyable and pleasant for all patients as it was for me.

Given my experiences with dental professionals, I assumed everyone in my area had similar experiences. It wasn’t until I was older when I realized that, in order to go to the dentist and orthodontist, I had to travel to a different county. Fortunately, I lived near the border of my county, and it was only a 25-minute drive to the pediatric dental office. However, I now know that many people in my county are not so lucky. Just a few miles north, there is farmland with long country roads. For many people in Niagara County, finding a dentist can be extremely difficult, especially if they don’t have reliable transportation. Access to care is a huge barrier in my county, and it results in many people foregoing their oral healthcare needs.

In dental school, I learned that Niagara County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for dental care. This means that there are not enough dental providers to adequately address the need for oral healthcare in my county. However, according to the American Health Resources & Services Administration, Niagara County, New York, is not a HPSA for mental health or primary medical care. Therefore, as a future dentist, I feel a responsibility to return back to my hometown to increase the availability of dental care for those who live there and to help bridge the gap between oral health and overall health.

Growing up in Niagara County has shaped me into the person I am today, and I cannot wait to return to the county that raised me to serve those who are in need. And when I open my own practice, I will be sure to have a “no cavities” button.

~ Nicholas Kagelmacher, D3
ALUMNI PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

Endowed Scholarship Will Help Fund Education for HPSA Students

To say that Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine shaped Mary Truhlar’s life and career trajectory would be an understatement. It was in the school’s lecture halls, laboratories, and clinic where Truhlar’s passion for dentistry materialized and grew as a dental student. Along the way, she met numerous lifelong friends and colleagues, including her future husband, Rich, who was a year ahead of her. Their family took root in the Three Village community, and it’s where the Truhlars made an impact as academics and dental care providers for more than three decades.

It all traces back to an opportunity that Truhlar, originally from the Syracuse area, received to attend Stony Brook. And now, through the Drs. Richard and Mary Truhlar Endowed Scholarship, it’s the kind of opportunity that she and her husband have committed to giving others from upstate New York. The scholarship fund is designated to help fund the dental education of prospective students from Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) in New York.

“Dentistry has been an important and incredible part of my life on so many levels,” she said. “When Rich and I attended, the school was very new. Tuition was extremely affordable, yet it provided us with an excellent foundation for our careers and our family. With this scholarship, we wanted to help the school continue to provide the caliber of training that it did when we were students, and, unhindered by debt, allow the next generation of dental professionals to attend school and choose the type of careers they want and we’ve been able to have.”

Adding to its impact, endowment gifts to The State University of New York institutions in 2024 are matched by 50 percent from the New York State Matching Fund for Endowment Contributions program.

“As administrators, professors, colleagues and mentors, Mary and Rich Truhlar have been part of the fabric of this school for more than 40 years,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. “We are incredibly appreciative of their generosity, which will help students pursue their dreams of becoming a dentist, and help to alleviate the oral healthcare disparity that so many areas in New York are experiencing.”

More than five million people in the state live in dental HPSAs, categorized by the United States Health Resources and Service Administration as regions with one dentist or fewer for every 5,000 residents or more. Thirty-eight percent of counties upstate are “Dental HPSAs.”

Truhlar’s own experience, and from the stories she has heard from upstate students during the admissions process, receiving care often necessitates a one- or two-hour drive. For specialty care, in some areas, it’s even more. It not only makes it more difficult for upstate residents to find care, it acts as a deterrent.

Those shortfalls spurred the SDM’s initiative to recruit students from HPSAs, as research has shown that they are five times more likely to return to the area to practice. The Truhlar Scholarship, too, will help create that bridge.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to now see students have chances that they might not have been otherwise able to have,” she said. “So many students have undergraduate debt, and then dental school debt, that drive the decisions they’re going to make in their careers. I’m excited to help give them more freedom to decide in which direction they will go, without this inordinate financial burden.”

Truhlar enrolled in the School of Dental Medicine in 1980, and after four years there she completed a two-year general practice residency at Long Island Jewish Hospital. She went on to receive her Master of Science in dentistry from Marquette University in Wisconsin, as well as a fellowship certificate in geriatric dentistry from Milwaukee Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) in 1988.

Truhlar returned to Stony Brook in 1990, and has been at the school ever since. In her tenure as its dean from 2014-2020, she established the oral and maxillofacial radiology advanced education program, launched the state-of-the-art Center of Implant and Digital Technology, and spearheaded many of the school’s outreach efforts, including to areas upstate. Truhlar currently serves as a professor in the Department of General Dentistry, which she has been a part of for more than three decades, and chaired from 2005-2014.

“I’ve had many different roles here at the school, from education to administration,” she said. “The relationship we have with our students, the way we know them, work with them and mentor them, really impacts their education, which is incredibly valuable and quite rewarding.

“Because I teach fourth-year students in clinic, and they’re on the cusp of graduating, they’re starting to stress a little about what residency is going to be like, and what their career is going to look like,” she continued. “And I tell them that I’d absolutely do it all over again. Without question, Stony Brook gave Rich and I the education and resources we needed to be successful, and it still does for students all these years later.”

Rich Truhlar passed away in 2022 after a long battle with multiple sclerosis. He, too, had a strong affiliation with and affinity for Stony Brook, practicing periodontics at the Northport VAMC, while also teaching in Stony Brook’s Department of Periodontics and Endodontics. The passing-down of such knowledge to students from HPSAs will continue, in part, due to the Truhlar Scholarship, a contribution that Mary Truhlar said has more to do with the trail that it blazes than the name attached to it. She has enjoyed having a front row seat to seeing students transform into skilled, prepared clinicians over their four years at Stony Brook.

“I really believe that Stony Brook provides one of the best, most comprehensive dental educations you could ever hope for,” she said. “I believe that this scholarship can open a path for students from HPSAs to make their way back home to practice, where their expertise is needed the most.”

Dr. Mary Truhlar

The Truhlar Endowed Scholarship will help fund the dental education of students from Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas.
FUTURE PLANS SET FOR CLASS OF 2024

The future recently came into focus for the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine Class of 2024, as 41 of its members who sought a residency position successfully secured one. Additionally, one fourth-year student will enter private practice upon earning their DDS, and another has committed to a residency with the United States Navy Dental Corps.

This year’s class will begin their careers across seven states, joining residency programs in general dentistry, oral and maxillofacial radiology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthodontics, pediatric dentistry and periodontics.

“I am so very proud of the Class of 2024, which is more than prepared for the next step in their journey, whether it be in residency, private practice or the military,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. “Our school has a long and proud tradition of educating students who will provide care for their patients that is both comprehensive and compassionate. I look forward to seeing these students thrive even further as they go forth from Stony Brook as our newest class of dental professionals.”

Beginning this summer, this year’s graduates will continue to serve the people of New York, with 27 of them entering residencies in 12 cities and towns across the state. Among them is Jesse Mulham, who will enter the oral and maxillofacial surgery program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan.

“I am beyond excited to start my journey as an oral and maxillofacial surgery resident at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell,” Mulham said. “Reflecting on my four years at Stony Brook, where we have been equipped with unparalleled clinical experiences, I am genuinely thankful for the opportunity to work alongside professionals that helped my classmates and me achieve such an incredible milestone in our lives.”

During Phase I of the Match in January, Gina Koros matched into the orthodontics residency program at her soon-to-be alma mater. She is one of five 2024 graduates who will continue their training at Stony Brook, joining current classmates Qi Dai (GPR/PhD), Nicole Vasquez (GPR), Jin Ha Kim (oral and maxillofacial radiology) and Sam Roth (periodontics).

“Matching into orthodontics at Stony Brook is an absolute dream come true,” Koros said. “Being able to continue my education at an institution such as Stony Brook will allow me to carry on a legacy of outstanding patient care and excellence in higher education. With the comprehensive education I received as a dental student at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, I am well prepared to enter the next chapter and I’m confident that I will thrive in residency.”
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Approximately two-thirds of the Class of 2024 will continue their careers in New York.
Symbolizing their commitment to the profession of dentistry and optimal care for their patients, the School of Dental Medicine’s Class of 2027 officially accepted their new attire — fresh white coats — at the annual White Coat Ceremony, held in April at Sidney Gelber Auditorium in Stony Brook University’s Student Activities Center.

Forty-five students crossed the stage in front of their family and friends, as well as faculty, staff and industry leaders in attendance. As is custom at Stony Brook, they begin seeing patients in the Dental Care Center at the end of their first year before seeing a full complement of patients this fall.

“Today’s ceremony marks a milestone for the Class of 2027 as each of you transitions into the role of clinical care providers,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. “With this white coat, you are accepting the critical responsibility to provide compassionate, respectful and empathetic care.”

This year’s entering class joined the school 50 years since its opening in 1973, approximately twice the size of the charter class. Of this year’s D1s, 91 percent come from New York State, with many planning to stay in-state after graduation to care for patients in urban, suburban and rural communities. With the school committed to helping bring oral healthcare access to all regions of the state, four students from Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSA) in the state are members of the entering class.

Dr. Steven Zove, interim associate dean for clinical operations and patient care, was once in their shoes as a member of Stony Brook’s Class of 1983. The significance of the white coat has not diminished since he put it on the first time.

“What does this white coat represent to me every time I put it on? We live in a rapidly changing environment in healthcare. Yet for me it stops when I put on this white coat,” Zove said. “It represents the ability to heal and relieve patients’ pain. It represents power, respect and responsibility. Patients trust that the knowledge and skill sets we have as dentists will be used with the patient’s best interest in mind. The patients trust us so be sure to treat them with respect, understand their beliefs and values, and listen to their concerns.”

During the ceremony, the Alumni Association recognized Reneida Reyes, DDS ’78, with the Distinguished Dental Alumnus Award for her service to her community and the profession. Dr. Reyes is the section chief of pediatric dentistry at NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, while also maintaining a private practice. Among her accomplishments, Reyes served as president of the American Dental Association Foundation’s board of directors from 2014 to 2016, and received the Distinguished Service Award from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry in 2021.

First-year students give the seal of approval on their new dental school attire.
PEDIATRIC DENTIST SELECTED AS 2024 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

As Reneida Reyes, DDS ’78, MPH, took the stage at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine’s White Coat Ceremony in April, the decorated pediatric dentist began her address with two words: Tempus fugit. In Latin, “Time flies.”

Back on the Stony Brook campus once more, Dr. Reyes has made the most of her time as a practitioner, teacher and in organized dentistry, prompting the SDM’s Alumni Chapter to name her as this year’s recipient of the Distinguished Dental Alumnus Award.

Among her many roles in her illustrious career in dentistry, Reyes served as president of the American Dental Association (ADA) Foundation’s board of directors from 2014 to 2016, and is currently the section chief of pediatric dentistry at NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, a position she held while also maintaining a private practice until 2022.

“I am certainly honored to receive this award,” Reyes said. “This recognition confirms the commitment of the School of Dental Medicine to develop a cadre of dental leaders from the inception who are dedicated to the oral health wellbeing of the community. The philosophy promulgated by the founding fathers of the School of Dental Medicine was reflected by the composition of the first two classes selected, who proved to hold high ethical standards and were always willing to serve.”

Also, she and classmates Wesley Hartwell and Paulette Tempro hold the distinction of being the first African-American graduates in SDM history.

“We were fortunate to be in a dynamic, innovative environment comprised of a faculty and administration as well as both clinical and research leaders committed to the student body,” she said. “As a class we had a very collegial relationship with each other as well as with the class ahead of us. We were very supportive of one another.”

Reyes’ journey in dentistry also includes serving as chair of the New York State Dental Association’s National Children’s Dental Health Month, having earned the American Dental Association’s Golden Apple Award in 2007 for establishing the Sugarless Wednesday Program. Reyes also chaired the ADA’s Reference Committee on Education and Related Matters, and served as a delegate and member of the Council of Memberships. She was also past president of the Second District Dental Society, whose Oral Health Committee she has chaired since 1984.

For her service to her community and the profession, Reyes has received numerous accolades, including the 2020 Second District Dental Society Distinguished Service Award, the 2021 Distinguished Service Award from The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry; the Dr. Susan Smith McKinney Award from the Brooklyn Hospital Center Black History Medical Synergy; the Foundation of Excellence in Community Service Award from the New York State Dental Foundation, the Women of Distinction Award from National Association of Health Services Executives; and Minds in Motion Award from the Science Skills Center Incorporated.

“How fortunate we are to count someone as accomplished and respected as Dr. Reyes among our network of alumni,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine. “She has been an inspiration and mentor to many aspirant dentists who have followed in her footsteps, and such a valuable contributor to our profession in so many ways, here in New York State and beyond.”

Reyes began her career as a dental hygienist, having received an Associate in Applied Science degree from New York City College of Technology. Later earning a Bachelor of Arts in inner city studies from Medgar Evers College, she enrolled in the DDS program at Stony Brook. Reyes then completed her residency in pediatric dentistry at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine and the Boston Children’s Hospital and earned a Master of Public Health Degree from the Harvard School of Public Health.

In addressing the Class of 2027 at their White Coat Ceremony, she encouraged them to soak in their four years as dental students.

“I urge you all to savor every opportunity presented to you, connect with your faculty, and remember that the relationships that you establish during this phase of your development will be lifelong relationships,” Reyes said.
their efforts result in discoveries that will add to the lab coursework. All in one place, we are able to see while carrying a heavy load of didactic, clinic and they’ve learned through countless hours of work, all wonderful opportunity for them to share what events for more than 40 years. “Each year, it is a said Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental students and their mentors can be so very proud,” in March 2025.

Awards were given to nine presenters, including the American Association of Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR)/Dentsply Sirona Student Research Award, which was given to third-year student Lauren Mistretta, for her research titled "Wettability of Different Implant Surfaces Before and After Erythritol Treatment and Exposure to Different Xenograft Materials."

The lectureship was named for Dr. Leo M. Sreebny, past dean and longtime faculty member at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Dr. Sreebny was committed to promoting discovery to SDM staff and faculty on hand at the SAC’s Sidney Gelber Auditorium. "We were so very fortunate to have Dr. Wright visit with us to address our attendees with a lecture that was both highly informative and engaging," said Stephen Walker, interim associate dean for research at the SDM. "His presence added to what was a terrific day that undoubtedly advanced our profession and the careers of those presenting.”

The lectureship was named for Dr. Leo M. Sreebny, past dean and longtime faculty member at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Dr. Sreebny was committed to promoting discovery to SDM students and residents, and before his passing in 2020, he and his wife, Mickey, pledged their support to SDM is committed to promoting discovery to SDM students and residents, and before his passing in 2020, he and his wife, Mickey, pledged their support to SDM

Continuing its tradition of promoting discovery and providing insights that advance the field of dentistry, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine (SDM) held its annual Research Symposium on March 28, with more than 40 dental students, master’s students and residents presenting their findings at the Student Activities Center (SAC) on Stony Brook University’s West Campus.

Researchers are able to see what they’ve learned through countless hours of work, all while carrying a heavy load of didactic, clinic and lab coursework. All in one place, we are able to see their efforts result in discoveries that will add to the knowledge base of our profession.”

Dr. Timothy Wright, professor in the Division of Pediatric Dentistry and Public Health at The Adams School of Dentistry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and editor-in-chief of the Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) delivered the Leo and Mickey Sreebny Distinguished Lectureship. Dr. Wright, a decorated educator, researcher and pediatric dentist, shared his presentation examining hereditary craniofacial conditions with more than 175 students, residents, and staff and faculty on hand at the SAC’s Sidney Gelber Auditorium.

"We were so very fortunate to have Dr. Wright visit with us to address our attendees with a lecture that was both highly informative and engaging," said Stephen Walker, interim associate dean for research at the SDM. "His presence added to what was a terrific day that undoubtedly advanced our profession and the careers of those presenting.”

The lectureship was named for Dr. Leo M. Sreebny, past dean and longtime faculty member at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Dr. Sreebny was committed to promoting discovery to SDM students and residents, and before his passing in 2020, he and his wife, Mickey, pledged their support for fostering such developments by backing the school’s annual Research Symposium.

2024 School of Dental Medicine Research Symposium Award Recipients

**AADOCR/Dentsply Sirona Student Research Award**
- **Lauren Mistretta, D3 student**
  - Co-authors: Rafael Delgado-Ruiz, DDS, MSc, PhD; Georgios E. Romanos, DDS, PhD, Prof Dr med dent
  - Topic: Wettability of Different Implant Surfaces Before and After Erythritol Treatment and Exposure to Different Xenograft Materials

**Hinman Symposium Award**
- **Brandon Axelrod, D3 student**
  - Co-authors: Mitchell Steinberg, DDS, MD; Rekha Reddy, DMD
  - Topic: An Unusual Clinical Presentation of Traumatic Ulcerative Granuloma with Stromal Eosinophilia

**AADOCR National Student Research Day Award**
- **George Kokkinos, D3 student**
  - Co-authors: Georgios E. Romanos, DDS, PhD, Prof Dr med dent
  - Topic: Altering Zirconia Implant Surgical Protocol to Achieve Higher Implant Stability

**AADOCR Long Island Section Student Research Award**
- **Yury Garaev, D3 student**
  - Co-author: Georgios E. Romanos, DDS, PhD, Prof Dr med dent
  - Topic: Qualitative Analysis of Implant-Bone Interface After Implant Placement Implementing Condensation Technique

**Sigma Psi Chapter Research Award**
- **Qai Dai, D4 student**
  - Co-author: Ying Gu, PhD, DDS
  - Topic: Inhibition of Streptococcus mutans Mediated Biodegradation with Low Dose Doxycycline

**Cardiovascular Disease Tomographic Images as a Risk Factor for Calcification in Dental Cone Beam Computed Tomography**
- **Steven Walker, DDS, Resident, Orthodontics**
  - Co-author: Mina Mahdian, DDS, MDSc
  - Topic: Artificial Intelligence-Based CVM Classification of the Vertebrae for Quantitative Growth Estimation from Cone Beam Computed Tomography

**Undergraduate Student Research Award**
- **Isabella Ho**
  - Co-author: Ying Gu, PhD, DDS
  - Topic: Effect of Novel Chemically-Modified Curcumin 2.24 (CMC2.24) on MMP-9 Activation Levels
COLLECTING A CLASSIC

Dean’s Interest In American Gothic Is More Than Meets The Eye
By Liza N. Burby

Chances are you’re familiar with the iconic 1930 painting American Gothic by artist Grant Wood that depicts a rural scene of two solemn-faced people in the Midwest. You may even believe you know exactly what it’s about.

But if you have a chance to speak with Patrick M. Lloyd, dean of the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, not only are you likely to have your interpretations permanently changed, but you might also be compelled to look for related items to add to his extensive American Gothic historical memorabilia collection. Such is his enthusiasm for and knowledge of not just the painting, but the artist behind it, that you can’t help but think about it differently.

And that’s exactly what Lloyd is hoping for: that viewers will look beneath the surface at their assumptions and be open to different interpretations. After all, it’s a lesson he began sharing with his dental students nearly 40 years ago, urging them when caring for older adults not to make prejudgments that could lead to the wrong diagnosis.
A Glowing Interest

Lloyd, who is a professor in the Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology, doesn’t recall when he first saw the painting, but he does remember the Smithsonian Magazine article he read in 1982, four years into his dental career, which changed his understanding and appreciation for the painting. While the article confirmed that American Gothic represented the Midwest, rather than a couple, the man and woman are actually meant to be father and daughter. To add to Lloyd’s surprise was learning that the “farmer” was actually the artist’s dentist, Dr. Byron McKeeby of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who never posed in front of the home, but rather in the waiting room of his dental office.

“That’s when it came to me that I could use it as a metaphor in my specialty area, caring for older adults. I had a slide that said ‘American Gothic, it’s a lot more complicated than it appears at first glance, like your older patients,’” said Lloyd, a board-certified prosthodontist.

As his interest in not just the painting but also the painter grew, Lloyd started to give his geriatric prosthodontic presentations all over the world, punctuating topics by showing parodies of the painting. The first time he gave the lesson was when he was working as chief of dental geriatrics and directing a fellowship in geriatric dentistry at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center where he gave lectures to the fellows who were training there. He joked, “It was like trying out material in a small venue before taking it to the big stage.”

As his interest in the American Gothic topic grew, so did his reach. Of the 22 countries he spoke in, the only one where recognition of the painting wasn’t present was Russia. At the end of the lectures, he would show a photo of himself holding a pitchfork, along with his wife and son, posing in front of the house in the painting. They spent a night there after he traded the caretaker of the house four tickets to an Iowa-Minnesota football game. Adding to his delight at the experience is that he slept on the second floor and got to look out the window that appears in the painting.

He also met with the artist’s sister, Nan Graham, before she passed away in 1990. Learning from her that Dr. McKeen wasn’t the stoic individual depicted in the painting, but rather a radiant personality who liked to tell jokes, was a nice bonus — and further proof of his message that there’s more than meets the eye upon initial examination.

Lloyd said that he’d start his lectures by showing the painting, emphasizing that because the near-century-old image had been promoted in so many products and services over the years, it has perpetuated and is as iconic as the Mona Lisa and Whistler’s Mother.

An Eclectic Collection

All of these personal connections were important to Lloyd, but along the way, he was making those same connections for dental students. Unexpectedly, those American Gothic parodies he was showing turned into a collection of a variety of two- and three-dimensional items sent to him by audience members. The first one appeared after he lectured at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1984. A week later he received an envelope from a dentist who had been in attendance. In it was a Trivial Pursuit card with the question: What does the dentist Dr. Byron McKeeny hold in his hand in the painting American Gothic? As he spoke all over the country, at some point, even a year later, he’d receive an item in the mail from a lecture attendee. “Sometimes these were mugs and pictures and clippings of things that they saw in a newspaper,” Lloyd said. “Then when I started using it in dental schools, my students would send me things when they graduated. Over the years, stuff just showed up — and it still does.”

What started as an interest became a hobby as he actively collects items. He said his wife now accepts that whenever they go, they will look for them. He’s organized the collection of anywhere between 4,000 and 6,000 items of 40 different categories into boxes at his home and in his office at the school. Among these are statuettes, clocks and watches, puzzles, movies, postcards, comic books, pins and magnets, a wooden music box and images from every state. He also has 42 different versions of a 1998 US First Day Cover commemorative stamp for which he helped Wood’s sister to lobby the Postmaster General in Washington, DC. His collection also includes memorabilia about Grant Wood. Lloyd believes he’s the curator of the largest collection of American Gothic historical memorabilia. Lloyd’s decision to bring art into lectures, while unique, was an opportunity for a profession in which most of what’s done is invisible to others and reflects his specialty of prosthodontics. “We have to be very concerned about certain things like symmetry, form, shape, color and transitions, and the ratios of width to height,” he said. “For instance, I have lectured on the aesthetics of the aging face and about ageist bias — that you may think a woman in her nineties doesn’t care as much what she looks like as she did when she was younger, when in fact she might even care more — so you don’t want to presuppose something about somebody based on a limited exposure. So I reinforced that by saying when you look at the painting, you need to dig a little deeper and ask a few more questions to be cognizant about what Grant Wood’s real intention was.”

Dean Patrick Lloyd (right) with his wife and son in front of the Eldon, Iowa, home made famous by American Gothic.
This metaphor in his classes evolved into a lecture “American Gothic History, Folklore and Lots of Parodies” that he’s delivered in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio. Though he’s not yet presented this talk since arriving in New York, he is passionate about the idea of bringing an appreciation for rural midwestern America to the East Coast, and feels American Gothic is a good way to do that.

To that end, he’s continuing a tradition he started when he was dean at The Ohio State University: to ask a senior dental student to create their own idea of an American Gothic parody with their own medium. Last summer, Jamie Wu, a fourth-year dental student, was among those who received an email from the Office of Education asking for interested students to submit examples of their artwork. Lloyd commissioned Wu, who is from Vestal, New York, for her New York-themed American Gothic. She recently completed her art of dry pastels on a pastel board. She said the message is that the farmer likes New York, but the woman would rather go home to Iowa. Wu’s painting will become part of Lloyd’s collection with other student paintings.

Wu, who said she was familiar with American Gothic, learned a new appreciation for it in speaking with Lloyd. “I thought this was a very fruitful experience. It’s not every day that you get to express your artistic skill.”

Because Wu is interested in working with the geriatric population—she will be doing her residency at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Manhattan next year—she said that Lloyd’s lessons resonated with her. “As I was doing this piece, there was a lot of things that I had to pay really intense detail to on the old version and the new version. I appreciated the lesson that it’s really important not to generalize about anything in life, especially dentistry, where everything has to be taken into consideration when you’re treating a patient,” she said.

For Lloyd, Wu’s interest is yet another opportunity to continue to share his passion for the painting and a way to bring the Midwest to Suffolk County. However, in case you’re wondering, he hasn’t yet found any Long Island-related American Gothic items — but he’s open to receiving them.

Midwest Values

Dean Patrick Lloyd’s collection of American Gothic memorabilia includes more than 4,000 items, of all shapes and sizes.
Following a nationwide search, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine has recruited Brian J. Howe, DMD, MS, as its new associate dean of clinical operations and patient care. Howe most recently served as a clinical associate professor in the Department of Family Dentistry, as well as the director of clinics, at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry in Iowa City, Iowa.

Howe will join the school in his new position beginning in July 2024.

“We are both excited and fortunate to welcome Dr. Howe and his family to the Stony Brook community,” said Patrick Lloyd, dean of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. “His vast experience and demonstrated record of success and innovation at Iowa will prove to be so very valuable as we work to further strengthen the oral healthcare services in our Dental Care Center.”

While overseeing the clinical operations at Stony Brook, Howe will also serve as a faculty member in its Department of General Dentistry.

“This is an exciting time in dentistry and dental education, and I am excited to join the Stony Brook SDM community as we move dentistry into the future,” Howe said.

A native of La Crescent, Minnesota, Howe earned his Bachelor of Arts in biology from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, after which he obtained a Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts. He also completed his Master of Science in oral science from the University of Iowa in the Department of Oral Pathology, Radiology and Medicine.

In addition to his academic responsibilities, Howe has spent several years in private practice in both Iowa City, Iowa, and Madison, Wisconsin, and practiced general dentistry in the college’s faculty practice at the University of Iowa. He also teaches dental students in the student clinics and has directed the college’s Treatment Planning and Clinical Practice and Professionalism courses. His research interests include discovering patterns in dental anomalies in children with orofacial clefting and using machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to mine data for patterns. Other research areas include using image classification algorithms to identify dental anomalies from intraoral photos and using AI to help integrate technology into clinical operations.

Howe’s educational prowess and research have earned several accolades, including being named Faculty of the Year at University of Iowa College of Dentistry in 2014. He also received the 2017 International Association of Dental Research (IADR) William J. Gies Award for Clinical Research for his publication “Spectrum of Dental Phenotypes in Nonsyndromic Orofacial Clefting” and in 2023 the David L. Swift Memorial Award from the American Industrial Hygiene Association for best aerosol paper for his publication “Effectiveness of local ventilation controls at reducing respirable aerosol concentrations in a multi-chair dental clinic”. Howe also is a member of the ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, vice chair of the Coalition for Modernizing Dental Licensure, and the councilor for the ADEA section on Clinic Administration.
Alexandra Makara, DDS, will be joining the School of Dental Medicine as a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry beginning in August. Dr. Makara is currently finishing her second and final year in the pediatric dentistry residency program at University of Rochester Eastman Institute for Oral Health.

“I am eager to immerse myself in the academic environment at Stony Brook and contribute to the school’s esteemed legacy of research and education,” Makara said. “The opportunity to engage with students and residents, collaborate with new colleagues, and pursue my passion for teaching in such a renowned institution is both humbling and inspiring.” Makara obtained bachelor’s degrees in biology and English from Fordham University before going on to earn her Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) from New York University College of Dentistry, where she also worked as a teaching assistant. She then completed her General Practice Residency at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, and after working as an associate dentist in nearby Huntington, she continued on to her advanced education training at Eastman.

GOLUB BEGINS TOLL PROFESSORSHIP

Lorne Golub, DMD, MSc, MD (hon.), a Stony Brook faculty member since 1973, began his appointment as a John S. Toll Professor in October. Golub holds more than 50 United States patents and over 100 international patents.

Dr. Golub was joined by family, friends and colleagues at a ceremonial dinner at The Fifth Season in Port Jefferson, New York, at which he was recognized for his decorated career in research.

Golub is responsible for the development of industry-leading drugs Periostat® and Oracea®, and during his career, Golub has received federal research grants exceeding $15 million from the United States and, earlier, from Canada. In addition to serving as a SUNY Distinguished Professor beginning in 2003, Golub held the roles of associate dean for research (1995-2003) and interim dean (2008-09).

STAFF AND FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Dolores Cannella, MS, PhD, associate dean for education at Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, has been elected as secretary of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) Section on Academic Affairs. The announcement came at the ADEA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, in March.

In this position, Cannella will help to fulfill the section’s mission of advancing dental education by supporting efforts to strengthen curricula, enhance teaching methodologies and assessment techniques, and optimize student learning and development. She will serve as secretary until the 2025 Annual Meeting in National Harbor, Maryland, at which point she will assume the role of chair-elect. At the meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 2026, she will ascend to the rank of chair.

At the fall ADEA Business and Financial Administration and Clinic Administration (BFACA) meeting in Pittsburgh, Opoku “Spencer” Busia, assistant dean for finance and administration, was selected to enter a three-year commitment with its planning committee. Busia will serve as secretary of the ADEA section on business and financial administration in year one, as chair-elect in year two, and finally as chair of the committee in year three.

Noé Escobar, assistant director of admissions and special events, became a member of the ADEA Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS) advisory group at the organization’s Annual Session in New Orleans. The group will review application processes to ensure better lines of communications and clearer expectations for applicants.

Escobar, who has been on staff at Stony Brook since 2021, also joined the ADEA Centralized Application Service (CAS) Personal Statement task force, which emphasizes the importance of submitting a strong personal statement.

Molly Richter joined the School of Dental Medicine as its credentialing and compliance manager in February. In this critical position, Richter ensures that faculty and staff documentation, including licensure, medical clearance, testing modules and certifications, are up to date. Richter graduated from Stony Brook University, from which she earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration and media studies.

Stacey Castagnola, manager of student instruments at the SDM, was among the inaugural class of Stony Brook University’s Leadership Development Academy, a nine-month-long educational experience that focuses on best practices in leadership. All participants were organized into interdisciplinary groups, and each spearheaded capstone projects on potential improvements for the university.
Thomas Manders, BS ’87, DDS ’91, director of the Division of Endodontics and Advanced Education Program in Endodontics, has been promoted to clinical associate professor in the Department of Periodontics and Endodontics.

Manders has been a member of the faculty at Stony Brook since 2016, having joined as a clinical assistant professor and director of the dental student endodontics curriculum, while also providing care in the school’s faculty practice. He began to oversee resident curricula the following year. Before returning to his alma mater, Manders spent more than two decades owning and operating private endodontic practices in New York City and Stamford, Connecticut.

Upon completing his Doctor of Dental Surgery at Stony Brook, Manders earned his general practice residency certificate at Danbury Hospital in Danbury, Connecticut, and his endodontics certificate at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He has been a diplomate of the American Board of Endodontics since 2018, and a fellow of the International College of Dentists since 2019.

Srinivas Myneni, BDS, MS, PhD, director of the SDM’s advanced dental education program in periodontics and director of periodontal research, has been promoted to associate professor with tenure in the Department of Periodontics and Endodontics.

Myneni completed his bachelor’s in dental surgery in 2005 at Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences in Bengaluru, India. After finishing his clinical training, he moved to the United States to pursue a dual PhD/periodontics residency program at University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine. He came to Stony Brook as a full-time faculty member in 2015, and has made significant contributions to the school in academics, research and community service.

Myneni’s research and clinical programs focus on novel therapies for the treatment of periodontitis and peri-implantitis and the influence of circadian rhythm on oral health and disease. He has contributed to 25 manuscripts, eight as a major or senior author, all appearing in well-respected journals. He also helped prepare two book chapters, one of which was in the most used text in periodontology internationally.

Jerome Cymerman, DMD, who began his career at Stony Brook University in 1985, was promoted to the rank of clinical associate professor in the Department of Periodontics and Endodontics. His tenure at the SDM has included serving as director of the Division of Endodontics, as well as director of the Advanced Dental Education Program in Endodontics. Cymerman received his DMD from University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. He went on to complete a general practice residency at University of Miami School of Medicine’s Jackson Memorial Hospital location, and then his certificate in endodontics at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, New York. Cymerman is a diplomate of the American Board of Endodontics, and has been in private endodontic practice for over 30 years.

In addition to instructing endodontic residents, Cymerman has been a mentor for their research endeavors. His own research interests include cone-beam computed tomography, pain control and the testing of antimicrobial medications in root canal therapy.

Soma Somohano Marquez, DMD, has been promoted to clinical associate professor in the Department of Prosthodontics and Digital Technology. She joined the SDM in 2015 as a full-time faculty member, and shortly after was appointed to direct the prosthodontics residency program.

Board-certified in prosthodontics, Somohano-Marquez has authored or co-authored numerous publications that have been published in prestigious journals, including in the April 2024 edition of the Journal of Prosthodontics. Her research efforts resulted in being award the SDM’s Sydney and Edith Golub Endowed Memorial Fund for Faculty Development in 2018.

Somohano-Marquez earned her Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Puerto Rico, and continued her training at a two-year general practice residency at Bronx Lebanon Hospital in New York. She completed her prosthodontics specialty training at New York University College of Dentistry in New York City, and then a fellowship in maxillofacial prosthetics and UCLA Dentistry in Los Angeles, California.
SDM HOSTS INAUGURAL DENTAL EDUCATORS DAY

This story first appeared in the Winter 2023 edition of the Suffolk County Dental Society bulletin. To read the bulletin in full, visit suffolkdental.org/bulletin.

More dental schools are opening. Dental school faculty across the country are aging. As a consequence, the shortage of those who can educate the next generation of dentists is being felt nationwide, which is why Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine sprung into action this fall, hosting its first-ever Dental Educators Day on October 5, 2023.

The occasion will be celebrated at Stony Brook Dental Medicine this fall, with no additional tuition costs. Also, Stony Brook’s Higher Education Administration — in four years can earn an education degree — a Master of Arts in Dental Education, if not the only school, where students interested in an academic career get a head start,” said Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD, associate dean, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. “We also hope that other dental schools — in the US and beyond — recognize the value of such a forum and that they consider hosting their own dental educators event in the coming years.”

With the increase in class size of many dental schools as well as the emergence of more than a dozen new dental schools in the last 15 years, the need to reinforce the faculty workforce has never been greater. According to an article in the Journal of Dental Education, over 40 percent of full-time dental faculty in the United States reported to be over 60 years of age. Recruitment of faculty is challenged by the misconception that private practice opportunities provide greater levels of total compensation.

“Stony Brook is uniquely positioned to help dental students interested in an academic career get a head start,” said Dolores Cannella, MA, PhD, associate dean, Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. “It is one of few schools in the country, if not the only school, where students can earn an education degree — a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration — in four years with no additional tuition costs. Also, Stony Brook’s general practice residency program offers select residents a second year of training, focused on developing the skills and gaining the experience as a didactic and clinical instructor.”

On the inaugural Dental Educators Day at Stony Brook, dozens of students, who are members of the school’s Student American Dental Education Association or involved in research, heard the perspective of Thomas Manders, DDS, director, Division of Endodontics and advanced education program in endodontics, Sri Myneni, DDS, MS, PhD, director, advanced dental education program in periodontics, Rekha Reddy, DMD, director of oral pathology, and Christine Valestrand, DMD, director, fixed prosthodontics technique course.

“There are many tangible and intangible rewards that I have enjoyed as a faculty member at Stony Brook,” said Manders, a 1991 School of Dental Medicine graduate who spent more than 25 years in private practice. “Dental Educators Day was a great opportunity to share what motivated me to stay in education at my alma mater, as well as advice for current students who are considering a similar path.”

Each panelist spoke about the path that they took to dentistry and ultimately to academia, as well what they felt was the most rewarding part of their role as educators, including giving back to the profession that gave them an excellent quality of life, the ability to stay on the cutting edge of the latest technological trends in dentistry, and the many healthcare and retirement benefits available at Stony Brook. “Follow your mentors and ask them who inspired them and what their career path was,” Reddy advised the day’s attendees. “One of the greatest things about working in education is that mentorship continues. You stay on top of the latest developments in dentistry. You have to take CE courses in private practice, but by working in academia, it’s almost like you have CE every day. You can continue to wear those multiple hats — doing research, serving as a mentor, and giving back to the future of dentistry by sharing your passion with others.”

All of the presenters acknowledged that it was the variety in their days that kept them enthused and excited about their careers in dental education. “No two days are ever the same,” was the common refrain. Adding to this was the yearly infusion of a new crop of students and residents who were eager to learn and asking all sorts of questions — helping keep everyone up to date on the latest discoveries and most advanced technologies. “We’re going to take a lead on promoting opportunities in dental education, so that our school continues to recruit the very best students and residents, by having the very best faculty,” remarked Lloyd. “Let’s hope other schools catch on and do their part in preparing the next generation of dental educators — the future of our profession depends on it.”

Drs. Sri Myneni, Rekha Reddy, Christine Valestrand and Thomas Manders outline their paths to working in academia — and its many benefits.
Fifty years ago, the first class was accepted to the Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. Since then, the school has graduated more than 1,600 students and residents who have dedicated themselves to delivering the highest quality of dental care throughout the country.

The golden anniversary was recognized the weekend of September 9 with a series of celebratory events, culminating in a dinner attended by faculty, staff, students and alumni from 27 graduating classes. The festivities also featured conversations with SDM luminaries Philias Garant, dean from 1979-1992; Vincent Iacono, faculty member, 1974 to present; and Ira Lamster, charter class graduate and dean emeritus, Columbia University College of Dental Medicine.

Among the first hires under J. Howard Oaks, inaugural dean of the school, was Iacono — SUNY Distinguished Service Professor, Tarrson Family Professor of Periodontology and chair of the Department of Periodontics and Endodontics — who holds the unique distinction of having taught every student who passed through the program over the past 50 years.

“It has been wonderful to see our graduates go on to make an indelible impact in their communities — through the services they have provided, and more broadly by advancing oral health practice through research and leadership roles in professional societies and dental education,” Iacono said.

“His dedication to our students and residents sets a standard for us all,” Patrick Lloyd, dean of the School of Dental Medicine, said of Iacono. “He has been a steady source of wisdom and insight over the past half century. He is often the first person people mention when I tell them that I am at Stony Brook, and they relay to me how influential he has been in his field of study and dental education.”

The School of Dental Medicine is Long Island’s largest provider of oral healthcare and the largest Medicaid dental provider in Suffolk County, and its Dental Care Center — the school’s teaching clinic — sees over 85,000 patient visits per year. The needs of the community have also influenced programmatic offerings for the school, which became one of the first in the country to offer a fellowship in the care of special needs patients. Because so many patients cite pain as the reason for their visits to the dentist, Lloyd has set a goal to recruit a pain researcher who can collaborate with others on campus in exploring pain transmission and in the development of new approaches in pain management.

Meanwhile, faculty members continue to make strides in dental research. In 2002, CaviStat, a cavity-fighting agent shown to be significantly more effective than fluoride, began clinical trials. CaviStat was developed by Distinguished Professor Israel Kleinberg, widely considered the “grandfather” of modern oral biology. Members of the School of Dental Medicine faculty hold more than 390 patents. A highlight of the 50th anniversary dinner was the introduction of the collegiate mace, an institutional symbol of strength, and authority. Attendees were gifted a ceremonial coin replica of the mace, which includes the insignia of the school along with a branch with 32 leaves representing the number of teeth in an adult mouth, with flowers at the end of the branch with 20 buds, signifying the number of teeth in a child’s mouth.

Looking to the future, Lloyd envisions a larger physical space, closer to East Campus. “While we are proud to be the only school on campus with a clinical operation outside of medicine, our current location has limitations in terms of access to personnel, equipment and physical resources available on the East Campus,” he said. “A closer alignment of space and resources would significantly enhance our capabilities and enable us to fully leverage our potential, benefiting both our trainees and patients.”

By Beth Squire

SDM TOASTS TO 50 YEARS, BRIGHT FUTURE

Guests were all smiles at the 50th anniversary celebration.
1978
After 40 years of practice and teaching pediatric and adult oral and maxillofacial surgery in Boston, Adam Orden, DDS '78, retired and, with his wife, relocated to Brooklyn. They are living in Carroll Gardens and enjoying time with their children and grandchildren. He has dived into some non-dental interests, including landscape and street photography, as well as jazz guitar.

1979
Wayne Harrison, DDS '79, was presented with the Dr. Thomas R. Curran Fluoridation Excellence Award by the New York State Oral Health Coalition. The award is given each year to those dedicated to promoting community water fluoridation in the Empire State.

1981
Barry Bass, DDS '81, retired from private practice in oral and maxillofacial surgery in the beginning of 2023, and is now a part-time attending at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Queens.

Mark Wolff, BS '77, DDS '81, GPR '82, PhD '97, Morton Amsterdam Dean and professor at Penn Dental, was named a 2023 Health Equity Hero by DentaQuest for establishing the Penn Dental Medicine Personalized Care Suite/Care Center for Persons with Disabilities. He was also honored by the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services with a My City, My Place Brighter Futures Award.

1984
Robert Lopatkin, DDS '84, was inducted into the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontists at the Angle North Atlantic Component annual meeting in Quebec City, Quebec, in April. Lopatkin has long served as a clinical assistant professor in the SDM’s Department of Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry.

1985
Fariba Younai, DDS '85, was selected as the new Bob and Marion Wilson Endowed Chair at UCLA School of Dentistry. She is also a professor of clinical dentistry in the section of oral medicine and orofacial pain in the Division of Oral Biology and Medicine, and chair of the Division of Diagnostic and Surgical Sciences.

1988
Craig Aronson, DDS '88, who runs Premier Dental and Premier Smiles in Orangeburg, New York, was elected to serve on the American Academy of Implant Dentistry Board of Trustees for 2023-24.

1990
Salvatore Lotardo, BA '86, DDS '90, became a fellow of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD). Lotardo served as the AACD’s president in 2020-21.

Robert Schindel, DDS '90, an orthodontist based in East Northport, New York, and a clinical professor at the SDM for three decades, was honored by Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism (NASSA) for his advocacy for and support of the autism community. Schindel has published research in conjunction with NASSA, and is currently working on a project that examines behavioral modification through video modeling. He has also initiated educational programs for SDM residents and undergraduates at NASSA’s Martin C. Barell School.

2010
Hugh Finch, DDS '10, MBA '16, released a new novel, "Arctic Revelation", which follows Dr. Christian Yates, a recent psychology graduate who is haunted by a traumatic past. More than half of the proceeds from its sales to support mental health awareness, opioid crisis relief and programs for veterans suffering from PTSD.

2022
Chloe Beninati, DDS '22, MPH '22, a graduate of the SDM’s endodontics residency program this spring, did so after completing her first-ever New York City Marathon in November. Beninati called it "an incredible feeling of accomplishment, pride, and gratitude for my body, my mind, my family and friends, and New York City." She traversed the five boroughs and raised funds for America SCORES, a program that brings soccer, poetry and civic engagement after-school programming to public schools across the country.

Do you have some news you would like to share?
Submit brief notices about milestone events and activities to brett.mauser@stonybrookmedicine.edu, or by mail to Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine, C/O Office of Communications, 101 South Drive, Stony Brook, NY 11794.
Dear School of Dental Medicine Alumni,

I am excited to share with you the latest updates from our esteemed institution, highlighting our achievements, ongoing initiatives and events on the horizon.

First and foremost, I am delighted to see the outstanding success in the 2024 match. More than 40 students obtained positions, with others going into private practice or the US Navy. It’s a testament to the exceptional education and training our students receive here at Stony Brook, and we take immense pride in their accomplishments.

Notably, the majority of our graduates are pursuing residencies right here in New York, underscoring the pivotal role we play in advancing the dental industry in our state.

Just in the last month, they set off for the next step in their careers. Your achievement marks the culmination of years of hard work and dedication, and I am proud to have you join the more than 1,600 alumni who have once called Stony Brook home.

I look forward to seeing them — and many of you — at Homecoming 2024 in Stony Brook this October, at which time we will celebrate landmark graduation anniversaries. It’s a time to reminisce, reconnect and celebrate the enduring legacy of our alma mater.

I encourage all alumni to join us for this special occasion.

Speaking of celebrations, our recent 50th year anniversary was a resounding success, enjoyed by all who attended. It was a remarkable milestone that allowed us to reflect on our rich history, celebrate our achievements, and look forward to a bright future ahead.

In the immediate future, I look forward to the unveiling of our new Mobile Dental Care Center in the near future. Our outreach initiatives will bring much-needed dental care to underserved areas, furthering our mission of service and outreach to communities in need.

In closing, I am continually inspired by the achievements of our alumni and the unwavering dedication of our faculty, staff and students. Together, we are shaping the future of dentistry and making a meaningful impact on the lives of others. I look forward to our continued collaboration and seeing many of you at upcoming events.

Warmest regards,
Stacy Reisfeld, DDS ’88
President, Stony Brook Dental Alumni Association

Alumni Board Members
Stacy Reisfeld, DDS ’88
Barry Bass, MS, DDS ’81
Mindy Brodsky, DDS ’97
Alec Canci, DDS ’12
Thomas Grandville, DDS ’11
Lauren Heisinger, DDS ’19
Gary Heitzler, DDS ’92
Jimmy Kilimtzoglou, DDS ’02
John Lupfer, DDS ’20
Joseph Manzella, DDS ’21, MPH ’21
Robert Feskin, DDS ’77
Jeannine Pistilli-Secko, DDS ’04
Bart Rizzuto, DDS ’92
Gerardo Romeo, DDS ’05, MD, MBA
Sandip Sachar, DDS ’97
Michael Shaffer, DDS ’12

SAVE THE DATE
ALUMNI RECEPTION

THIS YEAR’S CLASS HONOREES
1979  1994  2009
1984  1999  2014
1989  2004  2019

Saturday, October 26
Port Jefferson Country Club
44 Fairway Drive, Port Jefferson, NY

Join your classmates for an evening of great food and company. Details to follow! We look forward to celebrating your milestone graduation anniversaries each year.

A LETTER FROM THE DENTAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT
OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE SDM

Throughout the year, members of the School of Dental Medicine community can be found at numerous annual meetings held around the country. For these get-togethers, the school welcomes students, residents, staff, faculty and alumni to receptions, which are great opportunities for attendees to reconnect with their classmates, share stories, or provide updates on their careers or the latest happenings at the school.

There is another full slate of events coming up this fall, to which you are all invited. This includes the new reunion dinner set for Homecoming Weekend at Port Jefferson Country Club. See page 42 for additional details.

Take a peek at where we’ve been and what we have in store in the upcoming months. We look forward to seeing you!

HELP THE SCHOOL BUILD UP ITS HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

In its 50-plus years, many students, residents, staff and faculty have passed through the halls of Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine. So many memories have been created, and so much has been celebrated.

To help preserve its history, the school has recently created an archive space that includes yearbooks, photos, publications and other items from our past. Do you have anything that you would like to contribute? This collection already offers great insight into years gone by, and we would love to add to it!

Send all items to:
Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine
C/O Office of Communications
101 South Drive
Stony Brook, NY 11794

Questions? Email Brett Mauser, director of communications, at brett.mauser@stonybrookmedicine.edu.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 2024

August 15 • 5pm
All-School Barbecue
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

August 22 • 2pm
Give Kids a Smile Day
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

SEPTEMBER 2024

September 9-14
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons Annual Meeting
Orlando, FL

September 28
CommUniversity Day
Stony Brook, NY

OCTOBER 2024

October 3
Dental Educators Day
School of Dental Medicine
Stony Brook, NY

October 16-19
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiologists Annual Meeting
Honolulu, HI

October 17-19
American Dental Association SmileCon 2024
New Orleans, LA

October 24-27
Stony Brook University Homecoming
Stony Brook, NY

October 26
School of Dental Medicine Alumni Receptions
Port Jefferson Country Club
Port Jefferson, NY

EVENTS
Congratulations to the Dental Care Center staff members who recently passed the Civil Service Senior Dental Assistant Exam. From left to right, Bridget Rivera, Marisol Quinche, Celia Perez, Faline Musacchia and Valeria Mendez.

Second-year student Lasya Anantuni was awarded a Certificate of Recognition for Excellence in Research at this year’s New York Academy of Dentistry event in Manhattan.

D3 student Vito Liut took home second-place honors for the research he presented at the American College of Prosthodontists annual meeting in San Diego.

D2 student Danielle Ohana shares oral healthcare tips with local preschool students during a visit from the Smile Savers club.

Domingo Genao, a member of the School of Dental Medicine's custodial team for more than 20 years, was acknowledged by Stony Brook University President Maurie McInnis for his outstanding service as part of SBU's #ISeeYou campaign.

Stony Brook stands tall at the Long Island Women’s Dental Symposium, coordinated by the Nassau and Suffolk County Dental Societies.

D3 student Nick Kagelmacher and Dr. Nora Odingo, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, sing a duet in the SDM Talent Show’s return to the Wang Theater.

Dr. Ana Botta-Maltese shows the proper technique at the university’s inaugural Black Men in White Coats Youth Summit.

Dr. William Wertheim (left), executive vice president of Stony Brook Medicine, stops by the sim lab during his tour of the SDM.

Students and faculty take a quick break during their visit to La Romana, Dominican Republic, where they cared for underserved children at area schools.

Stony Brook comes out in full force for Suffolk County Gives Kids a Smile Day at the Long Island Aquarium.

Bright pink hats off to the SDM team, which raised more than $1,700 for breast cancer research and awareness programs at the American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Jones Beach.

D3 student Vito Liut took home second-place honors for the research he presented at the American College of Prosthodontists annual meeting in San Diego.
Axelrod cooks something up for a classmate during the school’s annual welcome back barbecue.

For 12 hours, SDM students, staff, and faculty demonstrated great creativity and dexterity in a unique Crochet-a-thon fundraiser, helping to raise funds for oral healthcare services for underserved children through the KinderSmile Foundation.

When Brandon Axelrod has completed twisting balloons of all colors this way and that, the result could be a bird. It could be a plane. And yes, it could even be Superman. Requests of all shapes and sizes are in fact on the table for the third-year dental student, who for more than a decade has been dazzling his audiences with his incredible creations.

“I made a 6-foot-5 Buzz Lightyear once,” Axelrod recalled, when asked about his most innovative handiwork. “I can also make all of the Disney princesses.”

When he isn’t caring for a patient, in lecture or preparing for an exam, Axelrod—who goes by the moniker “The Magic Brandini”—has been known to bring his vast inventory of balloons to events ranging from first birthday parties and retirement communities. In sitting down with On the Cusp, he shared how the inspiration to try his hand at balloon twisting came from his own emergency visit to the dentist as a child, and how he hopes to integrate his unique skill in his practice upon graduating.

How did you first get involved in balloon twisting?
The landmark events in my life are very much interconnected. When I was 5, I tripped and fell in the shower. I landed face first, and my front teeth were pushed up into my gums. As I was screaming and crying, my parents had to rush me to the dentist; they didn’t take me to a pediatric dentist; they took me to their dentist, who sat me down in his chair and started working on my mouth. He performed tricks and had me laughing the whole time. He ended up saving my two front teeth, and as a patient, it felt like everything was done so quickly.

It turned out my dentist knew magic, and whenever he had the chance, he would do a trick for his pediatric patients. He would incorporate dental instruments into his tricks, such as using a dental explorer for a magic wand. As a kid, it was captivating. I began to learn magic myself and would do tricks for him and his staff members.

When did you begin performing?
My first performance was when I was 11. It was for a bunch of my grandmother’s friends in Florida, and to be honest, it was a disaster. Somebody told me to add balloon twisting to my repertoire. I took lessons for that, and learned how to make a dog and a sword and a snake, but I knew that kids really wanted things like Sonic the Hedgehog, Peppa Pig, Mario and Luigi, and I told myself that I was never going to say no to any design, and all these years later, that’s a contract with myself that I’ve kept.

Have you ever been stumped by a request?
A lot of times I will get stumped by combination requests. For something like, say, a squirrel riding in a UFO, not only do you have to do each of those independently but they have to be interconnected and be the right proportion and size.

What are the types of events that you typically perform at?
I usually do more than 100 events every year. I’ll do birthday parties for people of all ages, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings, nursing homes, and I’ll adapt my creation to the demographic that I’m working for. If I’m working for young kids, everyone wants Steph Curry and LeBron James, but if I go to a senior center, I can make Yogi Berra or Babe Ruth.

What do you enjoy most about balloon twisting?
I love spreading creativity and positivity. I love seeing when kids can’t even process how something came together, and it’s great to see them get excited and playing with their balloon.

Do you anticipate continuing as Magic Brandini into residency and beyond?
Whatever my specialty is, I want to incorporate twisting into my practice. That’s the dream. By continuing as Brandini at least in some capacity, I could make it fun for kids to go to the dentist, just like my dentist did for me.

DENTISTRY WITH A TWIST
Stony Brook Student Brings Smiles to Faces Through Balloon Artistry

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Reconnect with your classmates and colleagues at our reception in New Orleans!

October 2024
New Orleans, LA