



**NU CHAPTER  
SIGMA PHI ALPHA  
DENTAL HYGIENE HONOR SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER  
MARCH 2017 - Eighteenth Issue**

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**Congratulations to our 2017 Inductees**



Left to right: Dr. Bonita Neighbors, Elizabeth Pitts, Amy Ravenga, Laura Wilkins, Jennifer Cullens, and Michelle Spencer

**Amy Ravenga – Senior**

It is indeed a privilege to participate in this year's Sigma Phi Alpha Induction Ceremony and introduce to all of you, Amy Ravenga. I first met Amy when I returned to teach at the School of Dentistry, last year, after a long career in dental hygiene education. I could immediately tell Amy was someone special. It was my first week on the clinic floor and I honestly felt as though she took me under her wing when demonstrating the numerous ins and outs of working the patient electronic record and the numerous clinic protocols. But it was during this time, that I had the opportunity to see how she integrated her didactic material into patient

care and critically thought through her decision making. She was extremely thorough in her knowledge, very competent in her clinical skills, and demonstrated empathy and compassion towards every patient interaction I witnessed.

This dental hygiene curriculum is broad in nature and offers a wide range of other learning experiences beyond the classroom. Amy took advantage of these opportunities and was a peer teacher for the courses Oral Anatomy and Biomaterials.

Additionally, she participated in a hospital dentistry externship, had an independent study with the PA 161 Fluoride Varnish Program,

Research Day, Give Kids a Smile Day, the Taft Clinic, ADHA student member day, of which she belonged to the student chapter all three years of the program. She further demonstrated leadership in her positions as Class Representative and Vice President. For these efforts, she received the Wendy Kershbaum Leadership Award in 2016.

Amy is married and is a mother of two children (9 months and almost 4 years of age), one of whom was born during her time in the Dental Hygiene Program, yet she managed to maintain a grade point average above 3.8, hold a job as a part-time dental assistant, as well as a full-time dental hygiene student. All these achievements came after several years of pursuing other dreams such as traveling to Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and initially selecting nursing as her career choice. I am, personally, so happy she changed her selection to dental hygiene for I see a bright future for Amy as she follows her new dream of expanding her passion and developing and running a PA 161 fluoride program as well as hopefully being involved with future caries control methods for special patient populations.

It is ironic that 59 years ago today, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the National Sigma Phi Alpha Dental Hygiene Honor Society was approved to also organize into the local chapters throughout the country that we have today. Esteemed late Dr. Esther Wilkins was the Vice President of the National Chapter. Amy, you have entered into revered company.

Join me in welcoming Amy Ravenga into the Sigma Phi Alpha - Nu Chapter, this day, March 25, 2017.

.....*Sheree Duff*

### **Laura Wilkins – Senior**

It is my pleasure to introduce to you today Ms. Laura Wilkins. Laura was born in Hillsdale, Michigan where she and her twin sister grew up. After receiving her BS in Geology, Laura felt like there was more to her life. She decided to go back to school. Her twin, now a dentist, encouraged her to research the profession of dental hygiene as a career choice. As she did, she fell in love. She loves working with patients

and helping all people. Some of her closest friends would call her kind, helpful, and gracious.

Eventually, Laura would like to pursue her Master's Degree and, maybe, even teach dental hygiene. For now, Laura is going to enjoy some new found free time with her husband, read piles of books, and enjoy her hobby of knitting.

Laura is a true professional. I have watched her grow clinically and personally over the last three years. She will be a great addition to our profession.

Please help me congratulate Ms. Laura Wilkins.

..... *Martha McComas*

### **Michelle Spencer – Degree Completion**

It is my great pleasure to introduce Michelle Spencer to you today. Michelle is currently a senior in our Degree Completion E-Learning program.

Michelle joins us today from White Lake Twp, about a half an hour north of Novi, where she lives with her husband, Aaron, and their three beautiful daughters; 8yo June, 7yo Mazzy, and wee little Ruby who is just now 4 mo old.

Michelle is a 2015 graduate of Oakland Community College. During Michelle's time at OCC she became involved in extracurricular activities such as class president, Student Chapter of ADHA, and served as both student and, later, component delegate to MDHA's House of Delegates.

After graduation from UM, Michelle hopes to continue honing her clinical practice skills while exploring opportunities to teach and to work with vulnerable populations here and abroad. She also has her eyes on pursuing graduate school in the near future.

Michelle actively seeks opportunities to help others whether it is mentoring 1<sup>st</sup> year DH students at OCC, volunteering at Mission of Mercy and Kellogg Free Dental Day, or providing oral hygiene education to the developmentally delayed and their caregivers. This passion for service, leadership, and promotion of the DH profession makes Michelle

a very worthy candidate for induction into Sigma Phi Alpha-Nu Chapter.

Please join me in welcoming Michelle Spencer.

.....*Jennifer Cullen*

### **Elizabeth Pitts – MSDH**

It is my great pleasure to introduce Elizabeth Idell Pitts. I have had the pleasure of knowing Elizabeth since 2012 and I know she will make a fine addition to our Sigma Phi Alpha organization.

Elizabeth is a native of Detroit and always liked teeth. As a child she was an orthodontic patient and loved the friendly atmosphere and professional staff. But that was just the beginning of her dental journey.

In 2007 Elizabeth graduated from Howard University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. After graduation she began working in an optometry office. She knew she wanted to advance her education and was deciding between dentistry and optometry.

Fortunately for us, dentistry won out. She enrolled at the University of Michigan in the dental hygiene program. Elizabeth knew she wanted a bachelor degree program as it would give her greater career opportunities.

This is when I first met Elizabeth, as a dental hygiene student in 3 Green! I was very favorably impressed with Elizabeth as student and knew she was off to a great career.

My next opportunity to work with Elizabeth was at MCHOR located at Domino's Farms. In 2012, Elizabeth and I were clinical examiners under Dr. Susan Taichman. However after one year, opportunity for community service knocked on Elizabeth's door and she answered. She accepted the position of dental coordinator for a Federally Qualified Health Care center with a school based mobile oral health care unit. For 3 years Elizabeth drove to elementary schools in the Detroit area, setting up a dental care area within the school building and provided thousands of children with free preventative dental care.

2015 was a big year for Elizabeth. She married James Pitts in May and began the Masters of Dental Hygiene program at the University of Michigan that September.

In September of 2016, I again was able to work with Elizabeth as a faculty advisor. Being a graduate student, she was required to spend a semester in a teaching situation. I was fortunate enough to be assigned. Elizabeth showed her true colors stepping up to the plate with every situation she was thrown into. She remediated students, created and presented ppt presentations on all sorts of clinical skills. Her students loved her. She will be graduating this year hoping to defend her thesis this summer.

She and James make their home in Livonia with their two daughters Jayonna age 10 and Jalayah age 7. Elizabeth is a member of ADHA and the Immediate Past President of a local component East Shore Dental Hygiene Association and enjoys reading, exercising and traveling.

.....*Mary Grace Ash*

### **Jennifer Cullen – Faculty**

It is an honor to welcome Jennifer Cullen as our 2017 Sigma Phi Alpha-Nu Chapter faculty inductee. Jennifer has been a part of our University of Michigan family since 2010 when she enrolled in the Dental Hygiene Degree Completion E-Learning Program. She received her Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene in 2012. Prior to this, she received an Associates in Applied Science in Dental Hygiene from Ferris State University in 1998 and worked in clinical practice until 2014.

It was apparent early on that Jennifer was an outstanding student and professional. Not only was she exceptional academically, she also demonstrated an ability to always go above and beyond. She exhibited this when her community project at the Huron Woods Memory Support Living Community was nominated by the E-Learning faculty for the American Association of Public Health Dentistry Dental Hygiene Student Merit Award for Outstanding

Achievement in Community Dentistry. This involved developing a comprehensive report of her project and she did so along with her other academic responsibilities, working full time, and caring for her husband and two children. Her efforts were rewarded as she received first place and presented her program's poster at the 2012 National Oral Health Conference.

Graduating with her bachelor's degree was only the first step Jennifer took in advancing her education. By 2013 she was enrolled in Benedictine University's Public Health Master's Program. During this time, she began working with Kathy Yee as a faculty assistant in the E-Learning Program's Community I and II courses, learning the ropes of teaching in an online environment.

As she took over the reins of the Community courses, Jennifer's other abilities began to shine through as well. Her commitment to our students, organizational skills, and her visionary thinking made her a perfect candidate for the role of Director of Dental Hygiene Degree Completion Programs. She assumed this role January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

Jennifer...you are a tremendous professional role model and asset to the University of Michigan. Congratulations on your well-deserved induction to Sigma Phi Alpha-Nu Chapter.

.....*Janet Kinney & Anne Gwozdek*

### **Dr. Bonita Neighbors – Honorary**

I'd like to introduce a very special person standing next to me, Dr. Bonita Neighbors, who is this year's honorary inductee into the Sigma Phi Alpha-Nu Chapter Dental Hygiene Honor Society. Dr. Neighbors hails from North Carolina and has a passion and interest in helping others her whole life, always putting the needs of the community first.

She earned her DDS degree from University of Michigan in 1986, and spent 25 years with the

Michigan Department of Corrections becoming the director at the Community Dental Center. There she was involved in countless activities with dental and dental hygiene students at the center as they provided care during clinic rotations, organized and ran donated days of service for the community, and facilitated research projects with students. Dr. Neighbors has helped so many people in the community obtain dental services, but her biggest help or achievement has been the wonderful experiences she offered to our dental hygiene students-giving and supporting them in hands-on experiences in community work! She is always thinking of ways to include hygiene and highlight students. And now she is working with students at Hope Dental Clinic. We want to thank you, Dr Neighbors, for your support of dental hygiene and your community outreach, and I would like to end with one of your favorite saying- your way of viewing life: "Its's all Good!"

.....*Darlene Jones*

### **Notes from the Secretary/Treasurer**

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, thirty six of us gathered for brunch at Weber's in Ann Arbor to welcome new members and conduct our annual meeting.

Vice President Jennifer Forgacs called the meeting to order at 10:30am. She thanked everyone for bringing donations for Safe House, a facility in A2 that provides support for those impacted by domestic violence or sexual abuse.

Jen asked Hope Woolley to read the Purpose and History of Sigma Phi Alpha. She then called on Dina Korte to introduce our junior guests. She also welcomed Sheree Duff on her transfer back to Nu Chapter.

Jen read the guidelines for faculty induction, induction by program, and honorary induction. Candidates were introduced and sworn in by the vice president. Introductions are shown previously.

Jen asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the 2016 meeting as printed in the 2016 Newsletter. Motion made and approved.

Beverly Gainer was asked to read the annual report.

## **Annual report:**

We began 2017 with an account balance of \$1,869.87. Dues of \$100.00 were sent to Supreme Chapter. Four key pins were ordered, \$120.00; six certificates for new members, \$90.00; donations were sent to: Research Day Dental Hygiene Awards - \$300.00, Hope Clinic - \$225, and the Christine Klausner Scholarship Fund - \$200.00.

The ePostcard to the IRS was submitted, accepted and filed with the Supreme Chapter to maintain our active status.

Twelve invitations were mailed to new inductees and junior guests. Plus seven to general members without email. One hundred invitations were emailed. Two sheets of stamps - \$19.60; a new ledger book - \$13.43; and a box of small envelopes - \$1.06 were purchased. Forty Agendas were printed at FedEx - \$11.44. Total = \$45.53. I am considering these expenses my personal donation to the society this year.

Prior to the brunch expense there is \$1,744.95 in our account.

## **Moving on to Old Business**

Lisa Dodge will continue to be our link to the U-M DH/SPA Website. (Google University of Michigan Dental Hygiene Program Sigma Phi Alpha Nu)

Connie MacKinnon announced the winners of our 2017 Research Day awards. See separate article on the winners.

Patricia Lengyel asked to be relieved of the scrapbook upkeep. No one volunteered, so Patricia graciously agreed to maintain the books for another year. PLEASE consider this position for next year.

Beverly Gainer agreed to continue doing the Newsletter but would welcome passing this task over to someone else.

Anne Gwozdek has retired and passed the liaison position of SPA-Nu/DentalUM over to Connie MacKinnon.

Donation sites will remain the same (Research Day DH Awards = \$300.00; Hope Clinic = \$225.00; Community Dental Clinic = \$225.00; VINA Community Dental Center = \$225.00; and the Christine Klausner Scholarship Fund = \$200.00), however, the amounts might have to be altered. Wendy Kerschbaum suggested that the Executive Committee meet to decide.

Sec/Treas Bev Gainer spoke about a decrease in sponsorship money and the dwindling of dues payments.

Several options were presented to alleviate this problem. One possibility was to make dues payable at a different time than with the annual invitation to the meeting. Another was to make it clearer in that invitation that dues were still payable even if you were not attending the meeting.

Rita Numan thought the younger members would respond better to an electronic form of payment. She will investigate this possibility and report her findings at a special meeting called for by the President.

It was motioned and approved to increase dues from \$15.00 to \$25.00.

New Member Amy Ravenga thought we could implement a spreadsheet to record dues rather than use a ledger book. She has offered her assistance in this endeavor.

Darlene Jones spoke about the need for carts for fluoride varnish delivery – Smiles for a Lifetime. Ellen Voss suggested passing the hat to raise money for this. The hat passing was a success – see separate note from Darlene. Also, note that we were able to increase our sponsorship money by \$105.00 by doing this.

Martha McComas thought the office of Secretary/Treasurer could be divided into two separate offices to lessen the burden of the one position and will present her ideas at the special meeting called for by the President.

For 2018 we will bring donations to our meeting from the Wish List of Alpha House.

Janet Kinney wanted to recognize Lisa Dodge, honorary SPA - Nu member, for receiving

the 2016 Candace J. Johnson Award for Staff Excellence. Here's the link to the full story:

<https://record.umich.edu/articles/school-dentistry-staffer-receive-candace-j-johnson-award>

### **Continuing on to New Business**

Annual meeting date set – March 24<sup>th</sup> 2018, continuing on at Weber's. Everyone seemed to like the addition of a waffle station to the brunch menu. Karen Ridley suggested a reminder Save the Date be sent out.

Ellen Voss nominated Patricia Piejak for Honorary membership. She will receive this honor at our 2018 meeting. No additional honorary nominations have been made. If you have someone in mind for 2019 please submit their name and a brief resume to our VP, Mona Riaz at [monariaz@umich.edu](mailto:monariaz@umich.edu).

This year Jennifer Forgacs steps up to be our President. We welcome Mona Riaz as our new Vice President. Beverly Gainer remains the Secretary/Treasurer. In the absence of President Allison Restauri, Past President Karen Essell swore the new officers in.

Meeting adjourned at 12pm.

### **WINNERS OF THE DENTAL HYGIENE RESEARCH DAY AWARDS**

The **Dental Hygiene Awards** are divided into two categories - Table Clinic and Original Research.

In the category of Table Clinic, Danielle Dale and Kasey Kim won 1<sup>st</sup> Place for their work entitled, *"Efficacy of an Oral Hygiene Regimen."*

Faculty mentor: Stefanie VanDuine.

In the category of Original Research, Chelsea Holladay won 2<sup>nd</sup> Place for her project entitled, *"Assessment of Michigan's Dentists' and Dental Hygienists' Perceptions Towards Obtaining Continuing Education Credits for Volunteering in Community Based Clinics."*

Faculty mentor: Anne Gwozdek.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Place award in the Original Research category went to Uzma Arif, Walaa Musleh, and

Sarah Niazi for their project entitled, *"The Prevalence of Face and Pregnancy Gingivitis."*

Faculty mentor: Stefanie VanDuine.

On occasion, exceptional dental hygiene student projects can be bumped into other categories and compete against Dental and Master of Science/Certificate student work. This year Rachel Bucceri, Lindsay Teeple, and Laura Wilkins took 1<sup>st</sup> Place in the **Clinical Research and Public Health** category with their project entitled, *"Oral Hygiene Instruction Research."*

Faculty mentor: Susan Taichman.

### **THANKS from Darlene Jones and the U of M Dental Hygiene students!**

I would like to send out a BIG THANK YOU to the Nu Chapter Sigma Phi Alpha Dental Hygiene Society for supporting the "Smiles for a Lifetime" Fluoride Varnish Program! With the cash I received from the meeting, I went out the next day and was able to purchase 5 new carts (had great coupon too) - which was wonderful because 2 old carts fell apart the very next week during our visits to the schools!! Your generosity was amazing, and so appreciated!





## In Memoriam: Melva Baxter, RDH



Melva Baxter (foreground) with Mary Layher, Anne Gwozdek and Jane Halaris - back row left to right

It is with sadness that we are letting you know that Melva Baxter, RDH, passed away on [April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017](#). Melva was a 1950 graduate of the University of Michigan (U-M) Dental Hygiene Program. A farm girl from Muir, Michigan, Melva graduated when Dr. Dorothy Hard was U-M Dental Hygiene Program Director. She was a proud member of Sigma Phi Alpha-Nu Chapter dental hygiene honor society. She had not missed an annual induction ceremony until 2017 when her health wouldn't permit her to attend.

Throughout her professional career Melva was always a staunch supporter of her profession of dental hygiene and her alma mater. She was extremely active in the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA), the Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association (MDHA), and Central District Dental Hygienists' Society (CDDHS, now Central Region Dental Hygienists' Society), serving in leadership roles in all levels.

Her special gift to all of us was her preservation of our history. She served as Historian of MDHA for 24 years. Over the past decade, Melva also worked closely with Shannon O'Dell, curator of the U-M School of Dentistry Sincuse Museum, and Collections Coordinator, Kathy Daniels. She contributed historic archives as well as photographs, stories, and timelines about dental hygiene and those who played important roles in the profession. Most recently, she served in an

advisory capacity in the development of one of the museum's current exhibits, "Dental Hygiene-A Century of Progress."

For additional information about this great lady whose dedication to the profession of dental hygiene and U-M is an inspiration for all of us, we encourage you to read her full obituary: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/laj/obituary.aspx?n=melva-baxter&pid=185245543&fhid=11047>. Melva's funeral will be held **Thurs, May 4, 2017** at Gorsline Runciman Funeral Home in East Lansing, MI. Visitation will begin at 11am with a service at Noon. Lunch will follow.

If anyone is interested in attending her funeral, please let Anne know ([agwozdek@umich.edu](mailto:agwozdek@umich.edu)). She is organizing car pools.

In addition to hospice, the family is requesting contributions in Melva's honor be made to the Christine P. Klausner Graduate Dental Hygiene Student Scholarship Award fund: <https://leadersandbest.umich.edu/find/#!/give/basket/fund/731830>.

Sincerely,

Janet & Anne

## YOUR 2017 - 2018 OFFICERS



Left to Right: President – Jennifer Forgacs,  
Secretary/Treasurer - Beverly Gainer,  
Vice President – Mona Riaz

