



Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors 2025 Awards

2025 ASTDD Awards Committee

Russell Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FICD, FPFA

Sam Zwetchkenbaum, DDS, MPH

Lori Kepler-Cofano, RDH, BSDH



ASTDD Excellence in Communication Award Iowa Oral Health Program

Healthy Habit All Stars Videos

Iowa's *Healthy Habit All Stars Videos* are short, simple, creative and communicate with ease. When you see one for the first time you are completely engaged. In fact, it is only after you have completed watching a video do you realize no words have been spoken, yet the message is crystal clear. That's because the videos are expertly crafted using animation, music, and sound effects to get their message across. Not an easy task but one that is extremely effective when communicating with the intended audience, which is children. But the videos communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. Teens, adults, and people who speak any language you can imagine will all connect with and enjoy the videos. They will also walk away learning an important oral public health lesson, all in just 90 seconds. Now that's nothing short of remarkable, a feat worthy of the 2025, ASTDD Excellence in Communication Award!

Cassidy Hanson



Chelsea Schmidt



Melissa Woodhouse



Mindy Wells



[Healthy Habit All Stars: How to Brush](#)
[Healthy Habit All Stars: How to Floss](#)
[Healthy Habit All Stars: How to Prevent Cavities](#)

Stephanie Chickering



Outstanding Achievement Award

Samuel Zwetchkenbaum, DDS, MPH

Sam served as staff dentist at Capitol Hill Health Center in Providence, Rhode Island following completion of his General Practice Residency. Sam was on faculty at the University of Michigan from 1995-2012, providing clinical care and directing the GPR program, and at the same time, he obtained his Masters in Public Health in 2006 at the University of Michigan. He completed a Fellowship in Geriatric Dentistry at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine in New Jersey in 2014 and subsequently served as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine and provided care to older adults in skilled nursing facilities using portable equipment. Sam served as President of the Special Care Dentistry Association from 2016-2018.



Sam was introduced to ASTDD in November of 2013 while he was a Geriatric Dentistry Fellow at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine. He was the primary author for the ASTDD Older Adult Best Practice Report. He subsequently joined the Healthy Aging Committee and then became chair of the committee in January 2018. He still serves in that role.

Sam has mentioned he thinks being part of ASTDD and being the primary author on the Older Adult BPAR helped him to move into his current role as State Dental Director in Rhode Island. He has served as the Dental Director in the Oral Health Program in the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Medicaid program in the Office of Health and Human Services since 2016.

Sam has two dogs, Brisket and Lucky, along with his partner Debby. He loves to take walks and has a very positive outlook on everything!

Nominated by:

Russell Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FICD, FPFA



M. Dean Perkins Distinguished Service Award

Helen Hawkey, BSDH

Helen Hawkey has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing dental public health, leaving an indelible mark on the state and national level. Through tireless leadership, effective advocacy, and fostering unity between stakeholders and decision-makers, Helen has played a pivotal role in promoting the necessity of dental public health and ensuring its sustainability. Notably, she has made significant contributions in the areas of assessing the status of oral health in Pennsylvania, championing policy development that promotes access to dental care, and ensuring there is a solid infrastructure to carry out future work.

As the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH), Helen has demonstrated both sustained and exemplary accomplishments in the field of dental public health. PCOH partners with the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Oral Health Program (PA DOH OHP) as the sole source contractor, driving statewide oral health initiatives. This collaborative model was recognized by ASTDD as a best practice approach and Helen's contributions supported the execution of Pennsylvania's first Basic Screening Survey (BSS) in 2021-2022 along with the development and implementation of 2020-2023 PA Oral Health Plan. As a result of this partnership, Pennsylvania now has meaningful guide for statewide oral health improvement efforts driven by state-specific data that lays the groundwork to measure the impact that statewide efforts have on advancing the oral health measures of Pennsylvanians. Additionally, Helen led in the creation of a series of dental workforce reports which were published through PCOH in 2022; the results of which illustrated dramatic dental provider shortages across the state. These reports are consistently referenced by state congressional representatives and local media, and the promotion of this work is a direct result of the trust Helen has built with partners across the state.

Driven by a shared mission, Helen has been able to harness the power of partnership development to bring together individual and organizational stakeholders and has been recognized by her peers for her unwavering commitment and knowledge. She maintains the role of advisor, mentor, educator, and clinician with various groups extending her impact beyond the conventional boundaries of oral health research and advocacy.

Nominated by:

Kelly Braun, RDH, MSDH, FADHA
Rural and Primary Care and Integration Coordinator
PA Office of Oral Health

Nicole Payonk, BS
Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
PA Coalition for Oral Health

Micah Gursky
Rural Health Clinic Administrator
St. Luke's Miners Hospital

Gina Sharps, MPH, RDH, CTTS, FADHA
Executive Director
WV Oral Health Coalition

Greg McClure Memorial President's Award

Christine Farrell, RDH, MPH, ELS

It is a pleasure to present Christine M. Farrell, RDH, BSDH, MPA, with the 2025 ASTDD Greg McClure Memorial President's Award. Chris has served the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for more than 36 years and was appointed the Oral Health Director in 2010. She currently holds an adjunct faculty position at the University of Michigan Dental Hygiene Master's Program. Chris has served as the Co-Dental Clinic Director of Special Olympics and has volunteered for over a decade for the Michigan Mission of Mercy.



Chris has received several awards including "Six Dental Hygienists You Want to Know" featured in Dimensions of Dental Hygiene magazine, The Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association Roger Hill Friend of the Profession Award, the ASTDD Outstanding Achievement Award and the ADHA/Johnson & Johnson Excellence in Dental Hygiene Award.

She is an active member of the Michigan Oral Health Coalition and served in multiple roles and committees for ASTDD, including ASTDD President from 2020-2022. Chris was previously president of the Michigan Dental Hygiene Association, a founding member and national chair of the Medicaid/Chip State Dental Association and the Council of Public Health Chair for the American Dental Hygienists' Association.

Chris has contributed and co-authored several publications on various oral health topics. Chris has served as an outstanding leader in public health and has consistently responded when asked to help in many ways. This award is well deserved!

Nominated by:

Russell Dunkel, DDS, BS, BA, FACD, FICD, FPFA