



*Association of State and
Territorial Dental Directors
2021 Awards*

2021 ASTDD Awards Committee

Christine Farrell, RDH, BSDH, MPA
Shelley Guinn, RDH, MPH
Sam Zwetchenbaum, DDS, MPH

ASTDD/ADA/CDC Fluoridation Special Merit Award

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



It is with extreme pride that I nominate Dr. Russell “Russ” Dunkel, Wisconsin State Dental Director, for consideration for the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors/American Dental Association/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fluoridation Special Merit Award.

Russ has faced challenges to community water fluoridation (CWF) in multiple communities in his state this past year. Wisconsin stood out as a state where the opponents to CWF had a strong “local” person on the ground who was the Fluoride Action Network’s Wisconsin representative and who was relentless on working in multiple small communities to cease CWF. Her work and communication style gave her the appearance of trying to save these communities from the harms of CWF. This was successful in several small communities, despite Russ and his team’s efforts to thwart them. The effective use of the internet, coupled with their on-the-

ground representative, made this small but vociferous group of opponents appear to be the majority opinion.

Enter COVID-19. Challenges to CWF opened a whole new world to the opponents. What was once an in-person meeting with CWF decision-makers to testify and provide credible science-based evidence on the effectiveness and safety of CWF, had to go virtual to protect people from the spread of COVID. This meant that these meetings would no longer be in-person but would transition to video conferencing formats. With the health departments “all-hands-on-deck” to battle COVID and little time to deal with CWF, this exponentially increased the opponents’ ability to flood these meetings with unlimited numbers of their “experts.” This was clearly evident in their first attack on Green Bay. The first Zoom meeting had approximately 50 opponents from around the U.S. and Canada on it; their big guns. The proponents had about seven. That set the stage for the next several committee meetings and the proponents’ impetus to shift gears.

Russ transformed his testimony, and that of the team, to make use of innovative technology to speak to council members one-on-one. He was the glue for the team that kept the response moving forward by utilizing modern tools in the face of a very demanding situation. This included a challenge to his professional license by an opponent who stated that he spoke incorrectly. Despite that challenge and defending his position, he kept testifying at every meeting. Momentum built in supporting Russ in this challenge from people and groups around the U.S., U.K, Australia, and Canada. Businesspeople, dental and medical professionals, state health department workers and dental directors, academicians, researchers, individuals, and members of other organizations joined in this battle. Everyone recognized this was a pivotal, novel approach to upend CWF that would spread across the globe. Testimony would go on for hours at each meeting. Nonetheless, Russ remained calm and steady when under fire. With his intestinal fortitude and scientific knowledge, proponents continued to pour onto these meetings to support Russ in his effort to keep Wisconsin fluoridated.

In the end, science prevailed. Accolades from here at home and around the world poured into Russ for his ability to beat the opponents at their own game. He continues to remain active in every battle around the state regardless of personal/professional attacks on social media or against his professional license. The health, safety, and well-being of communities are his top priorities. He rises above the criticisms to put the public’s health first and foremost. That’s who Russ is professionally and personally.

Submitted by Johnny Johnson, DMD, MS, President American fluoridation Society

Greg McClure Memorial President's Award
Tim Ricks, DMD, MPH
Rear Admiral, USPHS Chief Dental Officer, Assistant Surgeon General

I am honored to nominate Assistant Surgeon General, Rear Admiral Timothy Ricks for the 2021 ASTDD Greg McClure President Award. In my speech last year, I mentioned that we should be looking for ways to increase our connections and Always Be Connecting the Dots. Since becoming the USPHS Chief Dental Officer, Admiral Ricks has demonstrated his ability to search out connections and promote the importance of dental public health along with oral health's impact to overall health. He definitely is a **connector**, and he has exemplified this by his willingness to meet with students, organizations, coalitions and many partners. He has reconvened the federal dental meetings at the NOHC and has opened the meeting to any attendee. He has shared his monthly newsletter with ASTDD members. They always have an abundance of news and information.



One specific example of his willingness to promote interaction within the dental community is the Public-Private Partner Dental Coordination Group that he has convened during this past year as the result of the pandemic. The purpose of the group is to provide updates on organization activities, learn from each other and to support initiatives by the member organizations. This has been an opportunity to share with others and meet new people. His long-term goal is to continue this group and demonstrate the collaboration by multiple groups.

Admiral Ricks is also an active associate member of ASTDD and has long supported state and territorial health programs. He first became involved in supporting state and territorial oral health programs in 2006 when he was Chief of the Basic Dental Satellite Unit at Pyramid Lake, Nevada. Christine Wood, who was then the Program Manager for the Nevada State Oral Health Program, asked him if he would serve on the Nevada State Oral Health Program Advisory Committee. He accepted and soon also found himself on the planning committee for the 2006 Nevada State Oral Health Summit, a continuing education course for dentists, dental hygienists, nurses, and other interested healthcare practitioners. He served on the Advisory Committee for approximately a year before he was selected as the Area Dental Officer and Director of the Office of Public Health of the Nashville Area IHS, overseeing 27 dental programs and various health programs under the Office of Public Health. Chris remembers him as being keenly interested in helping out in any way he could, always having something to contribute, and always looking for ways to bring new stakeholders into the conversations, something that he still does to this day!

In his current role, Admiral Ricks oversees the development of the second-ever Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health. As the Chief Dental Officer of the U.S Public Health Service (USPHS), he serves concurrently in numerous national roles within the Indian Health Service (IHS). Admiral Ricks began his public health service career in 1999 in the Indian Health Service (IHS). He has been active in USPHS Corp activities throughout his career. He has received numerous awards for his work serving in leadership capacities for the USPHS while directing multiple national initiatives.

Admiral Ricks exemplifies the Greg McClure Presidents Award in demonstrating his passion for dental public health and is highly regarded by a personal colleagues and professional organizations. It is my honor to nominate Timothy Ricks for this award.

Submitted by Christine Farrell, RDH, BSDH, MPA, 2020-21 ASTDD President

Distinguished Service Award

Michelle Landrum, RDH, MEd



We are pleased to nominate Michelle Landrum for the ASTDD Distinguished Service Award. Michelle joined ASTDD as a consultant in 2009. She served as ASTDD Early Childhood Oral Health Committee consultant working with dental public health leaders dedicated to improving the oral health of infants and children from birth to age 5 through policy development and building infrastructure and capacity in states. At the same time, she was the Dental Hygienist Liaison (DHL) project co-lead consultant from 2011–2015 for our contract with the National Center on Health (NCH) and project lead consultant 2015–2020 for the subsequent contract for the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW). During the same period, she also served as Dental Hygiene Program faculty at Austin Community College in Austin, TX (2008-present), Head Start Oral Health Program Manager, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, San Antonio, TX (2006–2013), and earned a MEd in Health Education with a concentration in community health from Texas State University, San Marcos, TX (2013).

Michelle and previous Distinguished Service recipient, Kathy Geurink, were instrumental in proposing the Dental Hygienist Liaison project to the federal Office of Head Start (OHS). OHS enthusiastically approved the project through the NCH. Under the project, a volunteer dental hygienist who is a member of the American Dental Hygienists' Association serves as a communication link between the NCH and state Head Start agencies to foster collaboration with state organizations and Head Start programs around oral health issues. Since its inception, Michelle helped recruit a DHL in each state/DC, and then expanded the concept in 2015 to have 9 of the state DHLs also function as Regional DHL coordinators to serve as mentors and to help coordinate activities in their assigned regions. In 2019, the project received a presidential citation award from ADHA that recognized exemplary contributions to ADHA and the dental hygiene profession. Michelle also helped conceptualize a subsequent application for the third center, now the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health and Safety (NCHBHS), with ASTDD continuing as the DHL project lead. During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic Michelle was asked to be the full-time department chair and professor for the ACC Dental Hygiene Program, leading the faculty and students through a very difficult time. Because of these full-time commitments, Michelle resigned from her ASTDD consulting position but wants to still assist with special Head Start projects if time permits.

Many of the DHL project and other early childhood activity successes are attributable to Michelle's vision, passion and commitment to early childhood education, oral health, and family engagement. She presented countless webinars and workshops during the NOHC and at National Head Start conferences and Healthcare Institutes for parents and Head Start staff. She represented ASTDD along with the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center staff during meetings with other National Center partners, Office of Head Start staff, ADHA staff, and an Oral Health Advisory Workgroup.

Appreciating the goals of the Awards Committee, we are confident Michelle exceeds your expectations. Michelle Landrum exemplifies the essence of the Distinguished Service Award.

Submitted by: Beverly Isman, RDH, MPH, ELS, ASTDD Writer/Editor/Dental Public Health Infrastructure Specialist; Katrina Holt, MPH, MS, RD, FAND, Director, National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center; Kathy Hunt RDH, ECPII, National Center for Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety, Dental Hygienist Liaison Project Lead; and Gina Sharps, MPH, RDH, National Center for Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety, Dental Hygienist Liaison Project Co-Lead.

Outstanding Achievement Carol Smith, RDH, MSHA

Carol Smith, RDH, MSHA has demonstrated outstanding leadership both in the State of Georgia and in her roles for ASTDD and in other national organizations. Carol's background includes years practicing dental hygiene in private practice in New York and Georgia, and fourteen years as administrator of a dental hygiene program in Georgia. She started with the Georgia Oral Health Program in 2009 and in 2011 Carol took on the duties of the dental director for Georgia, a position she held until January 1, 2018, when DPH successfully recruited a new Oral Health Director. She was the first dental hygienist to lead the oral health section of MCH at the Georgia Department of Public Health.



While accomplishing the day-to-day work of managing the oral health program, Carol immediately began to search for quality, cost effective care especially for those with barriers to oral health services. She began to network and partner with public health programs and branched out to unify her messaging about the oral-systemic gap and the lack of integration of oral health into many medical practices. She wanted to unify the messaging so patients, oral health practitioners, and medical practitioners were all aware of and addressed the service gap and the importance of preventive oral services. With Carol at the helm, the oral health section completed two third grade Basic Screening Surveys (BSS), one Head Start BSS, and one older adult BSS. The older adult BSS was a pilot program and one of the first in the country to access the oral health needs of older adults.

In 2012 Carol played an integral part in planning the Georgia Oral Health Summit. The Summit brought together government, public health, academic, and professional organizations with private industry and healthcare providers to address oral health issues across Georgia. The summit was the launching pad for the development of regional oral health coalitions as branches of the Georgia Oral Health Coalition (GOHC). The Georgia Oral Health Coalition is now a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to increase access to dental care, prevent and reduce dental caries, periodontal disease, oral-facial trauma, and tobacco use, and detect oral cancer early and reduce its incidence.

Under Carol's leadership Georgia is one of twenty states to be awarded a CDC Oral Health Cooperative Agreement (three consecutive 5-year project periods) and one of six with a Chronic Disease Oral Health Collaborative Agreement. These grants support staffing, educational programs, school-based programs, and the community water fluoridation program. In the era of fluoride challenges, according to CDC, Georgia has remained one of the top ten states for CWF.

As a result of her partnership with the Infectious Disease team at the Department of Public Health on an issue with dental unit waterlines at a local dentist's office, Carol received the Department of Public Health Partnership Award in 2016. Carol effectively collaborated with an investigation team made up of health professionals, researchers, epidemiologists from several organizations including CDC, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and other public health staff to determine the source of the infectious agent, which was an unprecedented finding not just in Georgia, but nationally.

Carol has supported policies to align reimbursement, best practice services, and preventive oral health services. Changes in reimbursement began when Medicaid reimbursed medical providers for anticipatory guidance, oral health assessment, and fluoride varnish application. Medicaid changed the reimbursement for public health dental hygienists practicing under general supervision, improving the opportunity for generating more income to assist with reaching more children with preventive services. Legislation was passed in 2017 taking effect 1/1/2018, expanding the scope of practice for dental hygienists in Georgia. This law and under the rules agreed upon by the Board of Dentistry, expands opportunities for those with barriers to preventive oral health services and improves the opportunity for referrals for adults in nursing homes, prisons, homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, and children in low-income schools. A

collection of surveillance data, sharing of information, and working with partners all contributed to these positive changes for the people of Georgia. Working with the Department of Community Health on the Medicaid changes took years to accomplish and Carol persisted in working with numerous people along the way. Within the realm of what we can do in a state position and with appropriate use of our public health liaisons to the legislature she provided information to support change.

Carol's biggest and most important contribution was the education of healthcare providers and other stakeholders throughout Georgia on how essential good oral health is to overall health. She has broadened the oral health knowledge and services for the people of this state. With a limited budget, reaching medical providers and other stakeholders has allowed the oral health program to touch more lives. Through education she has helped to integrate oral health into many public health programs and medical practices. Carol supports the DPH district staff and has had a collegial relationship with the staff. After years of practice, she understands and can relate to the district staff serving patients with clinical services. She is available and willing to assist the staff with their concerns and needs. She has supported them in sharing their successes, experiences, and wins and sometimes losses in trying to reach our most vulnerable children in Georgia.

In addition to all the above, Carol served on the ASTDD Board of Directors for two years and on numerous ASTDD committees. Carol has demonstrated passion and perseverance to improve the oral health of Georgia residents. She has demonstrated her leadership abilities and the ability to bring partners together to create change.

Submitted by Dixianne Parker, RDH, MEd, Fluoridation Specialist/Educator, Georgia Department of Public Health and Adam Barefoot, DMD, MPH, Director of Oral Health, Georgia Oral Health Program.