

Educating Legislators

Effective dental education is fluid and dynamic, often occurring outside classrooms or academic buildings. It's a concept summed up in the proverbial saying, "the teacher goes where the student is."

As stewards of the public trust, LSUSD has the responsibility to educate key groups, such as members of the Louisiana Legislature, on issues that have an impact on the future of dentistry, dental education, and the practice of dentistry. "The populace is not as informed about oral health care as we would like," said Dr. Henry Gremillion, dean of LSUSD. "That's why it's important to go beyond our boundaries and have open dialogue with our lawmakers."

Dr. Gremillion was part of a delegation of six members of the LSUSD faculty who joined dentists from across Louisiana during the 2011

Dentists' Day at the Legislature in Baton Rouge on May 11. Dentists' Day is a grassroots event sponsored by the Louisiana Dental Association (LDA). The organization was founded 133 years ago and has a membership of 1,800 dentists who represent the interests of the public and the dental profession.

Dentists' Day is also a civics lesson in that dentists meet inside the state capital building where lawmakers debate and vote on issues of public welfare. The day begins with a series of presentations by key leaders. This year the presentations were made by Paul Rainwater, commissioner of administration for the State of Louisiana, and Kathy

Kleibert, deputy secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. Both discussed current economic conditions and the challenges of funding.

Dr. Gremillion presented an overview of the many improvements taking place at LSUSD as well as important issues related to the economy. The dentists were then instructed on how to meet with the state representatives and senators from their specific districts.

In addition to the dean, the LSUSD delegation included

Drs. Robert Barsley, director of Oral Health Resources, Community and Hospital Dentistry; Laurie F. Moeller, associate professor in the Department of Prosthodontics; Raymond Unland, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Prosthodontics; John Gallo, assistant dean of clinical affairs; and Sandra Andrieu, associate dean for academic affairs and



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immediate past-president of the American Dental Education Association.

"This was my first time attending Dentists' Day at the Legislature and I found it to be an informative experience," said Dr. Moeller, who is also president of the New Orleans Dental Association. "I had not been to our capital since I was a kid and seeing the House of Representatives in action was eye-opening. The benefit to me was a better understanding and appreciation of our legislative system."

"It was heartwarming to have everyone together," said Dr. Gremillion. "The LDA did a great job of bringing us all together in the same building with the same purpose."