

**FLORIDA ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY**  
**Fall 2009 Newsletter**

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**From your President:**

If I could choose one buzz word for this year it would be “access to care”. As pediatric dentists we are known to be generous with our time and talent. In helping to set up a volunteer clinic here in Tampa, one of the organizers said it is always easy to get pediatric dentists to volunteer. I always know I can count on my fellow colleagues but many times I feel that our efforts go unnoticed in the community especially in the media and the political arena. Sensational articles are written about how patients cannot find anyone to help them fix their teeth yet we give millions of dollars of free dentistry every year with few reported. We all know that volunteer efforts are an important part of our profession but volunteer acts cannot be the solution to access to care.

Project: Dentists Care (PDC) is an organization under the Florida Dental Health Foundation (FDHF) that coordinates volunteer clinics and volunteer services throughout the state. If you do not know the name of your area coordinator or an affiliate clinic in your area you can contact Cheri Sutherland at the Florida Dental Association. PDC also offers you the opportunity to volunteer to see prequalified patients in your own office by registering with your PDC Coordinator. You will determine how many patients you will be willing to see and with what limitations. If you and the patient sign a sovereign immunity contract (as provided by the state) your liability is reduced (patients must sue the state rather than you with any adverse outcomes when sovereign immunity guidelines are followed). It is also important to report the number of patients and the value of the pro-bono dentistry you provide to the state for tracking. Last year there were over 3 million dollars of reported pro-bono dentistry provided in Florida.

As all of you may know, the Medicaid lawsuit is set for trial beginning on December 7, 2009. The trial is a bench trial (there is a judge whom will make a decision, no jury). In recent weeks the judge has made several decisions that have paved the way for the lawsuit. 1. The

defendants' motion for summary judgment (i.e. judgment without a trial) was denied. 2. Class action certification was granted. 3. The defendants' request to postpone the trial was denied. Because the trial is not set to be on continuous days it could take several months for the judge to hear testimony and then it is up to the judge to make a decision.

One final thought, MEMBERSHIP. In this hard economic time where we are looking for areas to save money we must realize the importance of organized dentistry. Thanks to the wonderful leaders in our profession, pediatric dentistry has positions on boards and councils at the state and national level that are not represented by any other specialty group. Now, in this time where healthcare is at the forefront of impending change; it is important for us to come together as a profession to educate the politicians and the public about our profession rather than stand back and allow others to determine what is best for dentistry. The united voice of our organization allows our voice to be heard.

Respectfully submitted

Natalie Carr

**From your Legislative Advocate:**

**ALL EYES ON THE CHECKBOOK**

Legislative activity will pick up substantially right after the holidays in anticipation of the 2010 session of the Florida Legislature, which convenes in March. The consequences that will affect everything from medical and dental practices to automobile sales will be closely watched by me, as I represent you in Tallahassee. Every Floridian will be effected by the outcome of this coming year's legislative actions.

While there will be a number of substantial bills filed and debated, without question, the major focus will be on how to deal with an anticipated \$2.6 billion budget shortfall. The question will be how to deal with it, by either cutting services or increasing fees and taxes. According to a recent study, Florida is among nine states barreling toward an economic disaster similar to California's ongoing fiscal crisis.

The budget woes could mean higher taxes, accelerated layoffs of government employees, more crowded classrooms and fewer services in the coming year.

Double-digit budget gaps, rising unemployment, high home foreclosure rates and built-in budget constraints are the prevailing reasons.

The great recession has not just stalled Florida's growth — it has reversed it.

For example: From 2005 to 2008, Florida fell from its second-place ranking among the states in economic growth to 48th. Not too long ago, Florida was adding as many as 445,000 residents a year - but from April 2008 and April 2009, the population shrank by 58,000.

In 2006, the state's job market was one of the Nation's strongest. As of September, Florida's 11 percent jobless rate was eighth-worst. There are at least 275,000 homes for sale or rent in Florida that nobody wants, and the state has the second-highest foreclosure rate in the country.

These and other antigrowth factors add up to a serious state revenue shortage. Despite cutting \$6 billion from state spending since spring 2007, state lawmakers expect revenues to come up \$2.65 billion short of covering Florida's most critical and high priority needs in 2010-2011 – a deficit that's expected to swell to nearly \$5.5 billion the following year.

Of the \$2.65 billion, \$923 million is deemed critical, while the rest pays for other traditionally funded services, like a program that covers lifesaving medication for transplant recipients and other chronically ill patients. Increasing Medicaid costs are compounding the state's fiscal problems.

I encourage our readers to become involved and let your voice be heard by those you have elected to represent you in Tallahassee and hopefully, you can take a few days to walk the halls of the capitol as we make our needs and concerns known. The session promises to be a wild ride. Welcome aboard!

Respectfully submitted

John Grant

**USF Area Community Civic Association's Tower of Achievement  
Award Presented to Dr. Jim McIlwain**

Dr. James E. McIlwain won the Tower of Achievement Award, the University of South Florida Area Community Civic Association's most prestigious recognition given for at least a decade of service to the developing community, once known as Suitcase City. He was honored as a founding member of the University Area Development Corporation and his 12 years of service to the board. McIlwain, who has worked to help improve the lives of families in the area west of the University of South Florida, took top honors at the association's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. In an article published by the Tampa Tribune, McIlwain was quoted as stating that the board and others "are not finished but the work we have accomplished is amazing."

**Future Continuing Dental Education Courses:**

**March 19, 2010** - *Pulp Therapy for the Growing Child*, Hilton Hotel, Gainesville

6 CEU, sponsored by PedoGators, Inc. See enclosed brochure and registration form.

**April 30-May 1, 2010** - *Pediatric Conscious Sedation and ACLS Training*, Gainesville, FL, sponsored by FAPD. See enclosed brochure.

**Next Annual Business Luncheon Meeting:** FNDC Meeting, Orlando, FL, Friday June 11, 2010