Perusing His Priorities

Soul searching leads alum to sell practice, join charity clinic in Peru
Dear Colleagues,

For better or for worse …

In this issue, we celebrate special partners – dental students and dentists who married one another. Some share a practice or are on faculty together. We sometimes can’t live with them, but we certainly cannot live without them!

My husband, Dick Drisko, himself a dentist, supported me through a bachelor’s degree in dental hygiene followed by seven more years of dental school and residency programs, all while working as the sole breadwinner in the family. He delivered hot coffee each morning and a warm dinner at night, no matter how late I got home.

Words cannot express how important his love and support have been to the career successes I have enjoyed. Behind every successful woman is a good man.

As I think back on dental school, I can’t pass up the opportunity to tell one funny story about our early years of marriage.

When I was a junior dental student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Dick’s alma mater of 25 years, I approached the counter of the oral surgery clinic dispensary and accidentally touched a sterile area, only to get a very stern look from the old E-8 Sergeant, Miss Haldeen, who had been at that position for over 30 years.

After she read me the riot act, she inspected my name tag and said, “Drisko, Drisko…that name is familiar. Is your father a dentist?” Needless to say, she had the timeline right but the relationship wrong. We laughed about it for several minutes after she realized I was Dick’s wife, not his daughter.

Of course, I will be in big trouble when my husband finds out I have shared this story with you. But he has put up with me for over 35 years, and I suppose this too will pass from the “for worse” column.

I can’t talk about dental partners without mentioning those thousands of wives and husbands who are not dentists but support their spouses through their dental careers. Our alliance members, who faithfully help put their partners through school and support them in starting practices, often handle the books, the family and the front desk. We couldn’t live without them either.

I hope you reminisce a bit with your partner and tell them how much they mean to you and how supportive they have been throughout your dental career.

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…”
OPENED WIDE

Perusing His Priorities
Alum prepares for mission in Peru

Fun for a Cause
Annual “Derby Day” raises thousands

Hit Bicuspid’s Arrow
Dentistry and romance can sometimes be found in the same place

Filling the Void
Students help custodian get new teeth

DEPARTMENTS
Student BITES 8
Student Voice 17
Faculty BITES 20
Research BITES 22
Development 24
Alumni BITES 28
Perusing His Priorities

Soul searching leads alum to sell practice, join charity clinic in Peru

By Sharron Walls
After years of straightening the teeth of young Augustans with his sure and steady hands, Dr. Holton and his wife, Joanne, are setting out for South America to heed a calling. He’s already sold his practice and their West Lake home is on the market in anticipation of an August departure.

It all began in early 2006 when the Holtons were leading a financial Bible study at their church, First Presbyterian in Augusta. Some members of the class were forming a team to go overseas on a long-term medical mission trip.

“My wife and I sent out letters to people in the medical community who had been involved in previous mission trips who we knew had a heart for the developing world,” says David Daniel, a physical therapist and team leader.

“David had the vision and then he started recruiting,” Dr. Holton says. “We had just kind of been listening to them talk and then suddenly it was decision time. Joanne and I really thought it through: ‘Was this what God wanted us to do?’”

“I can’t remember who brought it up first,” Mrs. Holton says of their discussions. “We just started talking about it.”

So what’s he doing back in the classroom?

“It’s for our move to Peru,” he explains. “We’re on a new adventure.”

THERE’S BEEN A NEW FACE IN THE BASIC AND GENERAL DENTISTRY CLASSES THIS PAST YEAR – ONE THAT STANDS OUT FOR ITS MATURITY. IT BELONGS TO DR. ISAAC HOLTON (’76), AN ENDOdontist-orthodontist WHO HAS BEEN PRACTICING SINCE 1987, A MAN SO RESPECTED IN HIS FIELD HE WAS NAMED THE SCHOOL’S 2003 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS.

SOUL SEARCHING

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“I can’t remember who brought it up first,” Mrs. Holton says of their discussions. “We just started talking about it.”
Dr. Holton had previous short-term international mission experience in Bulgaria, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad through Mission to the World, the mission agency of the Presbyterian Church in America, which would be sponsoring the trip. This time it would be a five-year commitment, the agency’s first medical team specifically designed for ministry to the poor and academic medical assistance.

“We wanted to be a diverse medical community because the needs internationally are not just medical; dental needs are often the greater need,” Mr. Daniel says. “If you have a tooth that’s abscessed for years, you have a head that’s hurting for years. To be able to get that tooth out, there’s instant change in that person’s quality of life.” Having a dentist on the team would be a big plus.

The Holtons responded to the call, deciding it was, indeed, the right thing for them to do. And so Dr. Holton returned to school.

**FOLLOWING HIS HEART**

Things have changed in dentistry in the last three decades. Materials have evolved dramatically. So have techniques. Specializing in orthodontics for 25 years, Dr. Holton determined it was time to polish his general dentistry skills, the ones he’ll need most in Peru.

“I’m really getting up to speed on what they’re teaching the students now,” he says. “The faculty has been extremely accommodating, inviting me to classes; they’re really wonderful. It’s kind of neat because I know some of the students. One is the son of my co-resident in orthodontics. It’s not like I’m here totally without any reference points.”

Beginning last August, Dr. Holton cut his work load to two days a month in order to attend classes, and he stopped working altogether in December. His courses have included fixed prosthodontics, esthetic dentistry, dental materials, endodontics and basic fillings.

“I think it’s fabulous that he’s taking classes,” says Dean Connie Drisko. “I can understand why he’d want to refresh his information a little bit. It’s just another example of his extraordinary commitment to this mission. He obviously has a very strong calling to do what he’s going to do and you have to admire him. Not too many people really follow their heart like that.”

Part of Dr. Holton’s heart will always belong to MCG. A native Augustan, he spent three years in the U.S. Air Force after dental school, then came back for a one-year general practice residency followed by a two-year endodontic residency. He practiced for a year, then joined the faculty full time in the Department of Endodontics before entering an orthodontic residency in 1985.

“MCG has been a big part of my life; it’s been a great part of my life. I have thoroughly enjoyed being here. I just love it,” he says.
For four years the Holtons and four other families have been mentally preparing for a new and much different life. Dr. Holton, 56, is the senior member. “We really value him,” says Mr. Daniel, who, at 37, is more representative of the team’s age group. “With age comes wisdom. He’s kind of been there and done that. Age in the developing world goes a long way. They have respect for seniors, so with his credentials and his age he has a lot to offer. We want to be well received and be of use to the people there, to teach and educate and care for the poor. Sure, it’s adventurous, but we really want to meet needs. It’s not going to be easy living in the Third World. Ike has wisdom, he’s wise financially and he has administrative skills running a practice and a clinic.”

Of the 10 adults on the team, eight are MCG graduates. “We’re excited to be an MCG Augusta team,” says Mr. Daniel. Besides the Holtons, the group includes two physical therapists, two nurses, a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, an ophthalmologist and a pediatrician. Mrs. Holton, a first-grade teacher at A. Brian Merry Elementary School in Richmond County, will help home-school the group’s 10 children (there are two more on the way).

Members of the group, most of whom are friends “from way back,” make every effort to function as a team. They meet monthly and talk almost daily. “It’s very important that we’re clear on our vision,” Mr. Daniel says. They’ve all been involved with MCG’s Medical Campus Outreach, an MCG mentoring organization.

“I work with dental students, specifically the men in the class of 2010,” says Dr. Holton. “My wife works with wives of medical and dental students, the physicians work with medical students, nurses work with nursing students, etc.

“Of course, we all have to learn Spanish. I took a couple of quarters in college but that was 40 years ago,” Dr. Holton says with a wry smile. When they leave Augusta in August, the team’s first stop will be an immersion language school in Costa Rica.

“It’s particularly important if we’re going to a university setting,” Dr. Holton says. “We’ve got to know the language well and be able to communicate, so we anticipate being in Costa Rica a year.”

The treasure of Peru, Cusco lies in the southeastern part of the country near the Andes mountain range and the rediscovered ruins of Machu Picchu, making it a major tourist destination, with almost a million visitors a year. The city has a population of nearly 350,000, triple that of 20 years ago. At an altitude of 11,000 feet above sea level, it is one of the highest cities in the world.

Capital of the Inca Empire prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1533, Cusco now serves as capital of the Cusco Region and Cusco Province. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1983 by UNESCO and has been declared the Archeological Capital of the Americas.

Once the team was formed, locations in Brazil, Guatemala and West Africa were looked at before they chose Cusco, Peru. Concentrated in the mountains near the city are the Quechua Indians, descendants of the original Incans. It is this underserved indigenous population the team will focus on with its planned mission clinic.

Dr. Holton sees his role in Peru as pieces of a puzzle. One involves clinic work, another dental training in the city, where there is both a private and public dental school.

The team hopes to continue mentoring in Cusco with students at the city’s health sciences universities as well as MCG students traveling on mission trips to the area.

“I may seek a volunteer clinical appointment with the faculty of the dental schools in Cusco. That’s one of the reasons I’m auditing classes now; I need to be up to par with current
philosophy and techniques,” explains Dr. Holton.

“Ike has a real desire to be involved in dental education there,” says Mr. Daniel. “The health care training is not that good, so for a lot of what we want to do in the academic realm in Cusco, he’s going to offer a lot.”

“The students there are very poor,” adds Dr. Holton. “They don’t have computers; they have very limited access to the Internet. They can’t afford textbooks; they take notes or copy material.”

To help, the team anticipates renting an apartment or house close to campus for a Student Center for local students to “come over and chill out.” Computer access will be available, all funded by the mission group.

Another puzzle piece is mercy mission work, taking students into rural settings to deliver medical and dental care with a portable clinic. MCG students and private practice physicians and dentists traveling into the country on mission trips will bring equipment from Augusta.

“We hope that as we make relationships with the Peruvian medical and dental students we can take them on mission trips in their own country so they start seeing that part of their gift, part of being trained as a health care provider, is giving back to the country,” Dr. Holton says.

Establishing Roots

Part of the team’s preparation has been financial. Once in Peru, team members will receive no compensation. South American countries welcome North American health care providers, Dr. Holton says, but don’t want them competing financially with local providers, so compensation for providing health care is restricted.

Which can have its advantages. “Offering our services without receiving financial compensation will likely provide us latitude in what we can do,” Dr. Holton says.

With a five-year commitment, they’re all selling their houses, seeing this as a career change. The Holtons are self-funding about half the cost of this next stage of their lives by selling his practice—it is being taken over by Dr. Holland Maness (’05)—and the rest being raised from churches and individuals through the mission agency. The other families need to raise 100 percent of their support.

Twenty percent of the team’s funds will go toward their ministry – the student center, the mission clinic and taking the Peruvian medical and dental students on mission trips.

“Short-term trips are good, but if you have a long-term relationship you can actually do a lot more for the culture,” Mr. Daniel says. “Roots get established through being there. We want to establish roots in the academic community and within students’ lives and help people out in a way that’s better for them long-term.”

And what about after the five-year commitment is up?

“It could be that we stay on there longer than that. We don’t know,” Dr. Holton says.

“Yes, I have retired from private practice. But I don’t see myself retiring in the traditional sense. Rather, I see myself planning a retirement career move, intending to use my dental clinical skills as a tool to benefit the future dental providers of Peru.

“It could very well be that going to Peru and what we’re going to do there is retirement. We just don’t know. I think Joanne and I are just being very open to whatever God leads us to as this unfolds. You know, you don’t know a lot until you get there.”
Purely by chance, Mission to the World chose for its first academic medical outreach the same city that MCG chose for its first international residential health care clinic.

With residual grant money, Dr. Daron Ferris, director of MCG’s Gynecologic Cancer Prevention Center, built a permanent clinic in Cusco which opened in May 2008, dedicated to preventing and treating cervical cancer in indigent women. It has since expanded to women’s health in general.

“I had spent a year in Africa during college and learned that a sustained presence is critically important in health care,” said Dr. Ferris. “Our students love the experience; they come back raving about it. It immerses them in intercultural diversity, learning about the developing world, of which many have never experienced.”

The non-profit CerviCusco Clinic is staffed by a local physician and nurse and international experts, with a board of directors which includes MCG administrators and physicians. Medical and nursing students have traveled there on rotations, and allied health sciences students also have the opportunity. The clinic has on-site living quarters for 30 faculty and students.

It was while touring the facility last year that administrators suggested housing a dental clinic on the unoccupied third floor. School of Dentistry Dean Connie Drisko jumped on the idea and enlisted the help of Dr. Jimmy Londono, who has experience with a similar clinic in Colombia (see Word of Mouth, Winter 2009).

“It’s going to be great for the students and the school and wonderful for the community,” Dr. Londono said. “There’s a lot of need.”

Toothbrushes are rarely used in Peru and few of the population can afford dental care. Modern materials, supplies, equipment and dental care providers are sparse. Oral health programs are nearly nonexistent.

“We’re going to provide more than just emergency care,” Dr. Drisko said. “We’ll do extractions and oral surgery procedures, and focus on prevention and restoration work as well. Pediatric dentistry will probably be a large majority of our work.”

The four-chair clinic will have the latest in radiologic technology, including a digital cephalometric sensometric X-ray machine. Manufacturers and developers including Straumann and A-dec have donated equipment. Some equipment comes from MCG surplus. Contributions have provided for the rest.

MCG residents, students and faculty will serve two-week rotations year-round. A bilingual Peruvian dentist will run the clinic day to day. Continuing education courses in implant placement and oral surgery, among others, will be offered at the site.

“We’ve had initial conversations with both of the Peruvian dental schools in Cusco to set up affiliations with them,” said Dr. Drisko. “It’s an exciting opportunity.”

The clinic is scheduled to open in late summer.
Trotter Receives Scholarship

Senior LeighAnn Trotter has received a Paul Ambrose scholarship, sponsored by the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research. Named in honor of a young health professional who died on 9/11, the program brings up to 50 students to Washington, D.C., for a three-day leadership symposium which will guide in the implementation of a micro-grant funded, community-based health education project.

Law Day

Dean Connie Drisko (left) accompanied dental students to Atlanta Jan. 27 for the annual Georgia Law Day sponsored by the American Dental Education Association and the American Student Dental Association. MCG dental students boast 100 percent membership in the American and Georgia Dental Political Action Committees.

It’s a Match!

The School of Dentistry welcomes these 2010 residents:

Advanced Education in General Dentistry
- Misha Ghazariam
- Aubrey Hedrick
- Adrienne Wimbrow

Endodontics
- Alaina Pancio
- Allen Sawyer

General Practice Residency
- Sharla Bush
- Andrew Currie
- Phillip Kraver
- Benjamin Lyons
- Helen Rainwater
- David Weldon

Orthodontics
- Mark Causey
- Robert Crawford
- Travis Fiegle

Pediatric Dentistry
- LeighAnn Trotter
- Heather Wilson

Periodontics
- Darren Alvord
- Aaron Rawlings

Prosthodontics
- Esam Abou Nahlah
- Somkiat Aimplee
- Sergio Arias
Healthy Smiles
BY PAULA HINELY

Students from the Schools of Allied Health Sciences and Dentistry provided free treatment to elementary school students Feb. 5 as part of Give Kids a Smile Day.

MCG’s event is one of nearly 2,000 nationwide sponsored by the American Dental Association. Give Kids a Smile was initiated in 2003 to provide care and highlight the importance of access to dental care for low-income children. It is the centerpiece of National Children’s Dental Health Month, which is observed in February and focuses on providing oral health education to all children.

“We know that 80 percent of cavities are found in 20 percent of the population, and the high-risk kids are usually from low-income families,” said Dr. Tara Schafer, interim chair of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry. “This program allows us to reach those kids early, while removing the obstacles of cost and access to treatment.”

Approximately 65 second-graders from Richmond County’s Rollins Elementary School were bused to the School of Dentistry where dental hygiene and senior dental students provided preventive dental care including cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants and oral health education. Licensed dentists from MCG and the Augusta community also provided restorative care such as fillings or baby-tooth extractions to students as needed.

For more information, visit givekidsasmile.ada.org.
The School of Dentistry held a Dental Derby Day in October to raise money for the State Charitable Contributions Program. Faculty, staff and students enjoyed a variety of activities and raised $2,374.
Faculty Senate Enhances Input in Administrative Decisions  
BY PAULA HINELY

The School of Dentistry Faculty Senate has been in existence for less than a year, but it has already made strides to enhance faculty participation in administrative decisions.

"This is the first time that there's been a formal channel for faculty to have a voice in any facet of the school where our expertise might be utilized or faculty affected," said Dr. Jim Borke, professor of oral biology and the senate’s inaugural chair.

The dental school is the last of MCG’s five schools to create a faculty senate (sometimes called a “council”), which has historically served as the faculty voice in academia. Dean Connie Drisko appointed a committee to create bylaws for the senate last year. Senate officers and steering committee members were elected following faculty approval of the bylaws, and the senate began meeting in June.

“An open forum will allow more information flowing from the faculty forward,” Dr. Drisko said.

Before the first meeting, faculty members submitted anonymous comments that were categorized into topics including budget, curriculum, admissions and faculty development. Each of the senate’s five annual meetings focus on one topic. For instance, a recent curriculum-themed meeting covered integration of basic and clinical science, grading consistency and student externships.

“The idea is to have a dialogue that never existed before,” Dr. Borke said. “There could be a program that doesn’t work, and now we have an opportunity to discuss it and redirect it if necessary.”

The senate oversees 20 school committees that previously operated independently, allowing streamlined decision-making by eliminating or combining redundant committees and forming new ones to meet changing needs. The new structure also will allow faculty to resolve problems quicker.

“Ther’s a lot of promise here,” said Dr. John Blalock, associate professor of general dentistry and senate chair-elect. “This is really giving us a chance for shared governance.”

Faculty Senate Officers:
- Chair — Dr. Jim Borke, Professor, Oral Biology
- Secretary — Dr. Jill Lewis, Associate Professor, Oral Biology
- Chair-Elect — Dr. John Blalock, Associate Professor, General Dentistry

Officers serve two-year terms, with the chair-elect becoming chair after the initial term.

Faculty Senate Steering Committee:
- Two basic science representatives
  - Dr. Kalu Ogbureke, Associate Professor, Oral Biology
  - Dr. Regina Messer, Associate Professor, Oral Biology
- Four clinical science representatives
  - Dr. Jerry Cooper, Assistant Professor, General Dentistry
  - Dr. Gary Holmes, Associate Professor, Oral Rehabilitation
  - Dr. Andrew Kious, Assistant Professor, Oral Rehabilitation
  - Dr. John Stockstill, Associate Professor, Orthodontics
- Dean Connie Drisko, Ex Officio Member

Committee members serve four-year terms.
Both of Kate’s parents were teachers. So were Scott’s. One of his sisters, an attorney, married another attorney, and his other sister, a nurse anesthetist, married an anesthesiologist. And his grandparents? They were both music teachers.

So, maybe it was prophetic that Dr. Scott DeRossi, chair of the Department of Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences in the MCG School of Dentistry, would marry another dentist and educator – Dr. Kate Ciarrocca, instructor in the Departments of Oral Rehabilitation and Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences.

But it wasn’t for her. “I swore that I wouldn’t marry a dentist,” Kate says. “It just kind of happened.”

Students and alumni have met and fallen in love at the School of Dentistry through the years, and the school has become a communal workplace for several married faculty couples. Is it something about dentistry that brings these couples together? Not necessarily, they say.
Scott and Kate...

*P*eople expect us to be two geeky dentists who only talk about dentistry,” Scott says lightheartedly. With two daughters and a shared passion for God, jazz and fierce volleyball, that's not the case in the DeRossi-Ciarrocca household.

“But on the other side of that, it is also really nice to be able to talk to him about subjects that he understands,” Kate adds. The couple shares not only a profession, but also a specialty – oral medicine – which led to their first date.

Scott was a senior dental student and Kate a junior when they worked together in a grant-funded HIV clinic at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine in Philadelphia. After graduating, Scott remained at Penn for an oral medicine residency. That residency was Kate’s first choice, as well, and she wanted to pick his brain about it.

“We got together to talk about the residency, and it turned into our first date,” she says. “But we didn't talk about dentistry or oral medicine that entire night.”

They were engaged 11 months later, and Kate started her residency at Penn. At their Oct. 11, 1997 wedding, they gave their guests toothbrushes.

Kate finished her residency a year after Scott, so he put his specialty on hold for the year and practiced general dentistry because neither wanted to live apart. “That's how I knew how much he loved me,” Kate jokes. “He's very good at general dentistry, he just doesn't enjoy it.”

They stayed in Philadelphia for another 10 years, with Scott teaching oral medicine at Penn and Kate splitting her time between practicing general dentistry and teaching oral medicine until starting their family.

They came to MCG in 2007 and Scott became chair of Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences, a department that was expanding its mission to include public health, epidemiology, radiology, pathology and geriatrics. It was a good fit for Kate, who considers geriatrics her subspecialty. She teaches part time at MCG, serving a secondary appointment in her husband's department.

As the first doctor in her family, Kate kept her maiden name to honor her grandfather, so it comes as a surprise to dental students when they learn Drs. DeRossi and Ciarrocca are married.

“I think they get a kick out of us because we're somewhat open and make fun of each other in lecture,” Scott says. In fact, students get such a kick that for the past two years, several students have dressed as “DeRossi and Ciarrocca” for the dental school Halloween party.
Amy has family roots in dentistry. Her father, Dr. Michael Myers, is chair of MCG’s Department of Oral Rehabilitation, and her brother, Alan Myers, is a senior dental student. With the family ties, she never thought that she would marry a dentist herself.

Anthony spends time tutoring dental students and serves on the school’s curriculum committee. Amy recently founded SANO (Serving All Health Care Needs of Hispanics), an organization for MCG faculty, residents, students and staff interested in planning health-related events for the Hispanic community, learning more about the culture and brushing up on the Spanish language.

They plan to team up in May to do dental work in Peru during a mission trip sponsored by MCG’s Medical Campus Outreach, an interdenominational student ministry.

At the School of Dentistry’s 2008 Halloween party, sophomore Amy Didato first saw Anthony Didato, a junior, as more than just an acquaintance. She was Cleopatra and he was Wolverine, but despite their costumes, they found an endearing transparency in each other and noted similar values and desires.

“Parties can be full of superficial conversation, but here we were having this conversation that wasn’t superficial, and that kind of got me hooked,” Amy says. Anthony was won over by Amy’s beauty, independence and loving nature.

They married on Dec. 18, 2009 and took a honeymoon trip to Antigua before starting the spring semester this year.

“A lot of dental school is walking blindly, so having a spouse or significant other in the same boat definitely helps you get through,” Anthony says.

They study together and quiz each other, which gives Amy a preview of what she’ll soon learn and Anthony a review of material he hasn’t seen in awhile.
She has even helped Anthony meet his clinical requirements by becoming his patient twice. “We’ve increased her at-home care, and she’s a much more efficient brusher now,” Anthony jokes, as Amy adds that he’ll be repaying that favor soon enough.

“ Dating in dental school is frustrating because our schedules are so hectic,” Amy says, adding that being in the same school also has its benefits. When they run into each other in the hallway or lab, they take advantage of it.

“It’s kind of fun to grab a few minutes to talk to each other during the day,” Anthony says. Meal time is also a big deal for the couple. They try to eat lunch and dinner together every day without too much discussion about school or dentistry.

“We work really well together,” Anthony says. Even so, their interests in dentistry diverge, and they don’t see themselves in practice together after graduation. Anthony plans to pursue a specialty – possibly oral surgery or endodontics – and Amy is still exploring her interests.

Matt and Page...

When Dr. Matt Smith called the woman he was dating in dental school, he ended up talking to his future wife instead.

“He used to call my house to talk to my roommate, and I wondered why he never asked me out,” Dr. Page Smith says. When he finally did, she turned him down. Repeatedly. Page relented in the winter of 1985 – Matt was starting his final semester at MCG and Page was a junior.

“We rarely talked about dentistry in the beginning – there was no discussion of crown preps on dates,” Matt says. “We were comfortable with each other because we were raised in the same fashion, had similar morals and Biblical beliefs and a strong sense of family.”

Page went home after their first date and called her sister. “I said, ‘I don’t know if I’m going to marry this guy, but I know he’s someone I could marry.’”

After graduating in 1985, Matt moved home to Waycross to practice with his family dentist, Dr. George Thomas. “Page threw a monkey wrench into that plan,” he jokes. The following year, Page graduated and they got married. Her plans to set up her practice in nearby Blackshear, Ga. fell through. The Smiths say it was providence.

Instead of practicing with his mentor, Matt bought a practice from a dentist who was retiring after 40 years. There was plenty of work there for both of them. Page split her time practicing dentistry and working as office manager. Her experience

Family is the Smiths’ first priority. They have five children: Summer, 18; Courtney, 16; Candace, 14; Matthew, 7; and Leah, 4. Leah and Matthew were adopted from China in 2006 and 2009, respectively.

Matt and Page enjoy their small-town practice and say it really allows them to get to know their patients and form solid relationships with them.
Jacquelyn Whetzel knows what it’s like to be part of a dental couple. She and her husband, Josh, were already married when he entered MCG’s School of Dentistry in 2005, and she quickly became involved in MCG’s Dental Student Spouse Alliance. So while Josh was learning about fillings, crowns and gum disease, Jacquelyn worked hard in the alliance, becoming its president during his senior year.

It’s a commitment she’s continued now that she serves as the student spouse liaison between MCG’s DSSA and the statewide organization, the Alliance of the Georgia Dental Association. “We try to be a support system,” says Jacquelyn, who now lives in Madison, Ga. “We do a lot of lobbying with legislators in Atlanta, talking to them about concerns of the dental profession.”

The organization is also strong on education, particularly for children’s dental health. “For some kids, the first time they might get a toothbrush is when they’re in kindergarten,” she explains. “We introduce them to the idea of taking care of their teeth by going to classes, putting on puppet shows and passing out flyers. We do a lot in February, which is National Children’s Dental Health Month.”

Another state alliance project was the creation of a pamphlet on tooth-bottle decay. Members went to obstetrics and gynecology practices and put the pamphlet in packages that went home with new moms. The inspiration came from an alliance in the Midwest.

There are about a dozen spouse alliance organizations nationwide, which come under the auspices of the Alliance of the American Dental Association. “It’s great because we get ideas from the national level and other states’ alliances,” Jacquelyn says. The Alliance of the Georgia Dental Association has about 60 members, with a representative from each district. In her role as student spouse liaison between MCG and the state alliance, Jacquelyn works as a go-between, keeping each group informed about what the other is doing.

“I thank the Lord for putting us together, because only he knew best what we needed,” Page says. “Working together has really been a blessing.”

For more information about MCG’s Dental Student Spouse Alliance, contact this year’s co-presidents, Ashleigh Haycock at jhaycock@mcg.edu or Ashley Caughmann at pcaughmann@mcg.edu.

For more information about the Alliance of the Georgia Dental Association, visit www.gadental.org.
There are many different ways to save a tooth. We now have more restorative technology at our fingertips than the founders of modern dentistry could have ever imagined. But the best method involves no anesthesia or discomfort and is relatively inexpensive.

It’s called prevention.

Perhaps the most important population to reach with our message of prevention are those who cannot afford the cost of restorative dentistry. For this group, any level of dental decay can be detrimental.

Fellow student Aubrey Hedrick and I recently spent a two-week clerkship at the South Central Health District Dental Clinic in Dublin, Ga., where we experienced firsthand the difference one person can make on the oral health of a community.

Dr. Debra Smith (’84) and two assistants serve children in a 10-county area out of a mobile unit, offering exams and sealants and, most importantly, teaching kids how to care for their teeth. The impact on their oral health is dramatic. It is inspirational to see children who once had multiple abscessed teeth now needing only recall visits.

A turnaround of this type is testament to the influence that we, as oral health care providers, can have on a young person’s well being. These kids have been empowered to take responsibility for part of their health.

My hope is that it will translate into other areas of their lives.

Our clerkship in this rural setting gave Aubrey and me a new perspective on the disparity of access to care in Georgia. Dr. Smith’s only request as we headed back to Augusta was that once in practice we would seek out and help a child in need. If we all honored this request, just think how exponential the effect on the oral health of our state would be.
In the seven years Frank Langford has worked in the School of Dentistry, 32 things have been missing – his teeth.

“I lost them because I ate a lot of sweets,” the night shift custodian says. He’s seen dental students come and go over the years, but this year’s graduating class is sure to be one that he remembers.

Seniors Brandon Esco, David Quintero and Daniel White befriended “Mr. Frank” as sophomores when they started doing extra work in the “dirty lab” (see photo page 29) and staying well past the lab’s 11 p.m. closing time.

“I don’t mind them staying late, I just work around them and let them do what they have to do,” Frank says. “They’ve always shown me gratitude for that, and we get along real well.”

About a year ago the students wondered if Frank had any teeth. They wanted to talk to him about it but weren’t sure how to broach a potentially sensitive subject. One night, Brandon went for it. Frank easily recalls the conversation.
“Hey Frank, do you have any teeth?” Brandon asked.
“Nope, I don’t have any,” Frank responded.
“Would you like to have some?”
“Yes!”
“We’re going to try to get you some dentures. How about that?”
“That’ll work for me.”
“You don’t have to worry about anything, Mr. Frank.”

The students approached Give a Smile, a student-run foundation created to assist MCG dental patients who need help paying for their care. The organization was founded by 2007 graduate Dr. Nathan Dallas after treating a patient who lost her four front teeth due to domestic abuse and couldn’t afford dental work.

“Give a Smile is a spectacular foundation,” David says. “I’ve used it with some of my other patients, and knew it would be a blessing for Frank as well.”

Dental students present patient cases, including the desired treatment plan and how much the patient can pay, to a board of students that meet monthly to determine which cases to take and how much to contribute.

“When we brought Frank’s case to the board, they didn’t even really have to vote on it,” Brandon says. “Everyone knew Frank and said ‘oh yeah, we’re going to pay for that.’ “

Frank’s case has become an impromptu class project. The clinical process was divided so that six seniors who wanted to volunteer could each take an appointment or two. William Bennett, Alpesh Patel and LeighAnn Trotter share the responsibility with Brandon, Daniel and David.

While Give a Smile is footing most of the bill for Frank’s new dentures, lab fees weren’t included. So, Brandon and Daniel offered to do all the lab work for the case to eradicate the lab bill.

Frank’s shift ends at 6:30 a.m., and he hangs around the school until his 9 a.m. appointments.

“There’s no out-of-pocket cost for Frank; he just has to stay awake after he works his late nights,” Daniel says.

It makes a long day, Frank says, but it’ll be well worth it in the end.

“I was amazed, really just shocked, that they would show their love for me in this way,” Frank says.
Dr. Philip Hanes has been named assistant dean for academic affairs. He will provide executive leadership for the school in the areas of academic affairs, student progress policies, accreditation, pre-doctoral curriculum and advanced educations programs and will continue to serve as department chair of periodontics.

Dr. Marie Collins, associate professor of periodontics, has been named acting associate dean for student, faculty and community affairs in the School of Allied Health Sciences, where she is chair of dental hygiene. She earned her doctorate in education from Georgia Southern University and her undergraduate degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Collins joined the faculty of MCG in 1998 and her primary areas of instruction have included periodontal instrumentation, research design, pharmacology and basic life support.

Dr. Kevin D. Plummer, associate professor of oral rehabilitation, is the principal editor and author of the sixth edition of Textbook of Complete Dentures, published by People’s Medical Publishing House. This sixth edition is a modern version of the original textbook, aimed at dental students and general dentists. Shorter chapters, no longer than 20 pages, and over 600 new digital color photos are aimed at learning concepts of today’s dental student populations. An atlas supplements clinical practice of procedures associated with complete denture fabrication.

Dr. Cristiano Susin, senior research scientist in the departments of periodontics and oral biology, has been named associate director of MCG’s Laboratory for Applied Periodontal & Craniofacial Regeneration. Dr. Susin has also received a 3M Nontenured Faculty Grant, which recognizes outstanding new faculty for their quality and pertinence of research. The unrestricted $15,000 grant is intended to help recipients obtain tenure, remain in teaching positions and conduct basic research.

Dr. Michael Pruett, general practice residency program director, and Dr. Brooke Loftis, assistant program director, have been named fellows of the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.
Dr. Babak Baban

has joined the School of Dentistry as an assistant professor in the Department of Oral Biology. Dr. Baban comes from MCG’s School of Medicine, where he served as an assistant research scientist in the Department of Pathology and the MCG Cancer Center. He earned his doctorate at the University of London and a master’s degree in business administration from Augusta State University.

Dr. Ilanit Almog-Stern

has joined the School of Dentistry as a part-time instructor in the Department of Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences. She previously was a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Oral Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. She received her D.D.S. from Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine in Jerusalem.

Dr. Mark Stevens


### Obituaries

**Dr. Neil Melcher** died Oct. 6 at age 72. Dr. Melcher was an assistant professor at the MCG School of Dentistry for over 30 years and was on staff at University Hospital, Doctors Hospital and Walton Rehabilitation Center in addition to his private practice in Augusta. He served as president of the Academy of General Dentists of Georgia, the Augusta Jewish Community Center and the Augusta Torch Club. He was a board member of the Congregation Children of Israel, Palmetto Dunes-Queen’s Grant Association and the Augusta Opera. He was a member of the Symphony Leagues of Augusta and Hilton Head Island, S.C. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Maxine, two sons and five grandchildren.

**Elaina “Lainey” Hollis Redick** died of the flu Oct. 18 at age 4. Lainey was the daughter of Dr. Kimberly Redick (’01) of Richmond Hill, Ga. Survivors include her parents and a sister.
SIBLING Proteins May Predict Oral Cancer

A School of Dentistry researcher has found the presence of certain proteins in premalignant oral lesions may predict oral cancer development, a discovery that could allow clinicians to more quickly intervene in a disease that kills more than 8,000 Americans a year.

The study by Dr. Kalu Ogbureke, an oral and maxillofacial pathologist—published online in February in the journal Cancer—focused on a family of five proteins that help mineralize bone but can also spread cancer. The proteins, Small Integrin-Binding Ligand N-linked Glycoproteins, or SIBLINGs, have been found in cancers including breast, lung, colon and prostate.

A previous discovery that three SIBLINGs—osteopontin, bone sialoprotein and dentin sialophosphoprotein—were expressed at significantly high levels in oral cancers led Dr. Ogbureke to probe further.

"Following that discovery, we began to research the potential role of SIBLINGs in oral lesions before they become invasive cancers," said Dr. Ogbureke, the study’s lead author.

Dr. Ogbureke examined 60 archived surgical biopsies of precancerous lesions sent to MCG for diagnosis and the patients’ subsequent health information. Eighty-seven percent of the biopsies were positive for at least one SIBLING protein—which the researchers discovered can be good or bad, depending on the protein. For instance, they found that the protein, dentin sialophosphoprotein, increases oral cancer risk fourfold, while bone sialoprotein significantly decreases the risk.

"The proteins could be used as biomarkers to predict the potential of a lesion to become cancerous," said Dr. Ogbureke. "That is very significant, because we would then be in a position to modify treatment for the individual patient’s need in the near future."

Precancerous oral lesions, which can develop in the cheek, tongue, gums and floor and roof of the mouth, are risk factors for oral squamous cell carcinoma, which accounts for more than 95 percent of all oral and pharyngeal cancers. Oral cancer is the sixth most common cancer in the world, Dr. Ogbureke said.

Treatment has been stymied up to this point because of clinicians’ inability to predict which lesions will become cancerous. Surgery is standard for oral cancer, but treatment methods vary for precancerous lesions.

"When we treat these lesions now, there’s an implied risk of under- or over-treating patients," Dr. Ogbureke said. "For example, should the entire lesion be surgically removed before we know its potential to become cancer, or should we wait and see if it becomes cancer before intervening?"

Further complicating the matter is that the severity of dysplasia, or abnormal cell growth, in a lesion can be totally unrelated to cancer risk. Some mild dysplasias can turn cancerous quickly while certain severe dysplasias can remain harmless indefinitely. The protein findings,
which help eliminate the guesswork in such cases, “are fundamental,” Dr. Ogbureke said. “If we’re able to recognize these lesions early and biopsy them to determine their SIBLING profile, then oral cancer could be preventable and treatable very early.”

Dr. Ogbureke’s next step is to design a multi-center study that incorporates oral cancer risk factors, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, to further investigate their relationship with SIBLING protein expression.

**Student Research Presented**

Dental and dental hygiene research on topics including orthodontics, implants and bone regeneration was presented during the School of Dentistry’s Annual Table Clinic Day and Poster Presentations Feb. 17.

The event, featuring research from students, residents and faculty, was hosted by the School of Dentistry Student Research Group, the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Dental Research and the American Student Dental Association.

“This was a great opportunity for those involved in dental research to share their recent discoveries with their peers on campus,” said Dr. Amara Abreu, assistant professor of oral rehabilitation and president of the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Dental Research and the American Student Dental Association.

“Push Out Strength of Three Endo Sealers”

“An Ancient Gene Network Is Co-opted for Teeth on Old and New Jaws”

“Development of a Predictive Animal Model for BIONJ”


**School of Allied Health Sciences Department of Dental Hygiene students**

First place: Brittany Hall and Laura Farmer, “Bisphosphonate Related Osteonecrosis of the Jaw”

Second place: Unema Rupani and Sergio Rowe, “Incontinentia Pigmenti”

Third place: Janna Alexander and Rebekah Holmes, “Reverse Anesthesia with OraVerse: The Phentolamine Meslate Injection”

**FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR**

This fall, a recently awarded grant from the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program will allow Dr. Ogbureke to expand his oral cancer progression research at Nigeria’s Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

“Cancer-causing human papillomavirus is endemic in Nigeria,” he said.

Dr. Ogbureke’s nine-month study will investigate the expression of HPV16 in archived oral cancer biopsies. Data will be correlated with patient outcomes and SIBLING expression using the same techniques perfected and standardized in his SIBLING research.

The J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board selects approximately 1,100 Fulbright Scholars annually to lecture and conduct research around the world. Established in 1946, the flagship international educational exchange program’s alumni have received 40 Nobel Prizes, 65 Pulitzer prizes, 26 MacArthur Foundation Awards and 16 U.S. Presidential Medals of Freedom.
Look What You’ve Done

Just a few short months ago, we broke ground for Georgia’s new School of Dentistry building. Rain and unseasonably cold weather have been unable to hinder construction, and work on the third floor of the five-story building has already begun.

Without the support of the many alumni, friends, dental organizations and foundations and corporations that have invested in the future of dentistry in Georgia, your new building would not be where it is today.

If you can’t travel to campus to see first-hand how the new school is transforming the landscape, we’ve arranged for campus to come to you. You can now view the current state of construction on your computer via an on-site Web cam installed for your convenience.

You can access the Web cam by visiting www.mcg.edu and following the expansion links to dentistry. Or, go directly to: www.mcg.edu/sod/expansion.

We are proud of our new home and equally proud of the countless people who have brought this dream to reality. This is an exciting time for us, and you share in our success.

Thank you.
GAGD Member?

Are you a member of the Georgia Academy of General Dentistry?

If you are, you now have the opportunity to double your investment in the MCG School of Dentistry’s new building through the generosity of the GAGD.

In January, the GAGD announced it would match dollar for dollar all new contributions from members up to $25,000.

If you have been waiting to make a gift and are a GAGD member, now is a great time to help us achieve this potential of $50,000.

If you have any questions about this generous initiative, please contact the School’s Development Office at 706-721-4156 or the GAGD Executive Office at 404-299-7987.

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THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS
Dr. Melvin O’Neal Baker
received the 2010 I Have a Dream Award at the 25th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration in Covington, Ga., given annually to an individual who exemplifies the philosophy of Dr. King. Dr. Baker, the first black dentist in private practice in Newton County, opened his practice in 1976. He chairs the board of directors of Washington Street Community Center and serves on the board of directors of Newton Medical Center. He is a member of the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Dental Association, the Georgia Dental Association, the Newton County Community Band and the NAACP. Dr. Baker lives in Oxford, Ga., with his wife of 36 years, Gussie. He has three children and five grandchildren.

Dr. Marilyn A. Russell,
a periodontist in Fayetteville, Ga., has been recognized by the Stanford Who’s Who. She runs Progressive Periodontics, a specialty practice providing periodontal care, dental implant surgery and other dental care services. Dr. Russell is retired from the U.S. Army, where she earned the Legion of Merit Medal. She is affiliated with the American Academy of Periodontology, American Dental Academy, Georgia Dental Association, North Georgia Dental Society, Georgia Society of Periodontology and the Hinman Dental Society.

Dr. Greg Goggans,
an orthodontist and state senator from Douglas, Ga., received the 2009 Family Medicine Legislative Champion of the Year Award from the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians. The award is given to a lawmaker who demonstrates leadership and commitment to Georgia family physicians and their patients. He was also named a 2009 Public Health Hero by the Georgia Public Health Association. Dr. Goggans, who has represented the 7th District since 2004, serves on the Appropriations, Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Finance and Transportation committees.

Capt. James J. Ware, U.S. Navy,
is commander of the Navy hospital ship, USNS Comfort, which has been providing relief to earthquake-stricken Haiti. He lives in Annapolis with his wife, Francie, and their four children.

Dr. Truong “John” Tran
has opened Bainbridge Family Dentistry in Bainbridge, Ga., after practicing in Atlanta and Gainesville, Ga. Dr. Tran and his wife, Ann, have a daughter, Vi.

Dr. Reamer W. Allmond Jr.
died Feb. 9 at age 66. A native of Millen, Ga. Dr. Allmond was a graduate of the University Of Georgia School Of Pharmacy and was in the first graduating class of the MCG School of Dentistry. He was a member of Abilene Baptist Church and participated in two medical dental mission trips to Guatemala. Survivors include his wife, Annette, two sons, one daughter, two grandchildren and three sisters.

Dr. Matt Culberson
has joined the orthodontics practice of his stepmother, Dr. Anne T. Sanchez, in his hometown of Milledgeville, Ga. He and his wife, Amy, recently welcomed daughter Laura Grace.

Dr. Stan Rentz
has opened Rentz Family Dentistry in St. Mary’s, Ga.

Drs. Richard and Shannon Creasman
have opened Expressions Aesthetic Dentistry in Atlanta, a full-service dental practice with an emphasis on appearance-related procedures.

Don’t Forget...


Obituaries

Do You Receive Duplicate Copies? Please help us minimize our mailing and printing costs by letting us know if you receive Word of Mouth at multiple addresses. Contact Linda Saunders at 706-721-6215 or lsaunders@mcg.edu.
The mission of the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry is to educate dentists in order to improve overall health and to reduce the burden of illness on society through the discovery and application of knowledge that embraces craniofacial health and disease prevention. Its vision is to be a premier school of dentistry. MCG is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educational institution that prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or status as a Vietnam War veteran. The MCG School of Dentistry believes a diverse student body enhances the educational opportunities for all students and is beneficial to the dental profession, the School of Dentistry and the state of Georgia.
EVENTS FOR DENTISTRY ALUMNI:

Friday, April 23

22nd Annual Marvin Goldstein Lectureship and Luncheon
Marriott Hotel and Suites, 8 a.m. lecture, noon lunch. Dr. Markus B. Blatz will present "The Ceramic Update in Esthetic Dentistry." Luncheon honorees include Distinguished Alumnus Michael Vernon ('77) and new Alumni Association lifetime members. Contact the Division of Continuing Education at 706-721-3967 for registration.

Alumni Association Reception
Marriott Hotel and Suites, 3–5 p.m.

Saturday, April 24

Saturday Continuing Education with Faculty
School of Dentistry, Room 1020, 9 a.m. breakfast and registration, 9:30–11:30 a.m. program. Free for Alumni Association members, $50 for others. Pre-registration is encouraged.

Patriot’s Boat Tour of the Savannah River
Marriott Hotel and Suites dock, 2–3:30 p.m. Seating is limited to 60. Cost: $10 ($20 after April 9).

Banquet and Class Reunions
Marriott Hotel and Suites, 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. banquet. Honorees include the classes of 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005; Distinguished Alumnus Michael Vernon ('77); and new Alumni Association lifetime members. Cost: $60 ($70 after April 9). Tim Conway Photography will take class photographs. Cost: $20 per 8X10, payable to the photographer by cash, check or credit card.