May is a month of many celebrations at RSDM. There is only one convocation, but there are other chances for farewells, send-offs and events for alumni to say hello again. As summer arrives in June, the pace slows, but only a bit. We have our summer Gateway to Dentistry program and the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program, which bring an influx of young students who are curious about dental medicine. And as always, we are treating patients and spending time learning. We work hard at RSDM, but I hope that you all have a chance to relax and enjoy the summer!

When a Special Olympics athlete was stricken with severe tooth pain and facial swelling at the USA Games last month, he received help from Daniel Dinowitz, an RSDM resident in pediatric dentistry. “It’s a good thing that he came in because he had an abscess and needed urgent care,” said Dinowitz, one of several RSDM students, faculty and alum who volunteered to give dental screenings and teach athletes about oral health at the games, held at the College of New Jersey. To get the word out about the dental end of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes program, Dinowitz dressed in a plush molar costume at the event. “This is a great way to teach people about oral health in a lighthearted way,” he said.

For many with intellectual disabilities, adequate dental care is scarce. That’s one reason why RSDM volunteers have been part of the Special Smiles program for more than a decade. “Our mission is to increase access to dental care for Special Olympics athletes,” explained Dr. James Delahanty, clinical director of the NJ Special Smiles program and an adjunct associate professor at RSDM. “We not only want to help the Special Olympics athlete take good care of his or her teeth but also raise awareness of the need for more dentists willing to treat patients with intellectual disabilities.”
How to Succeed in Dental School?
SMDEP program Shows the Way

In high school, Andrew Wildeman got an up close look at the dental profession in RSDM’s Decision for Dentistry program. But last month, he learned what it takes to succeed at dental school during the six week Rutgers Summer Medical Dental Education Program.

The national program, started by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to boost medical and dental school enrollment among minority students, has been held annually for rising college sophomores and juniors. Started in 1989, it combines lessons on research, science and public health with an intro to clinical basics, like making wax impressions. But an important part of SMDEP is giving participants a sense of what it’s like to navigate dental school as both applicant and student.

Wildeman spent time shadowing an RSDM student mentor, who gave him honest, detailed information about getting into dental school and making the grade once you’re there.

“I got to ask him as many questions as I wanted,” said Wildeman, a senior at the University of Maryland, who grew up in Neptune, NJ. “Coming here makes dental school and becoming a dentist more tangible to me. You realize it’s not impossible. I just have to work if this is what I want.”

Wildeman was one of 26 students nationwide who participated in RSDM’s portion of the program. “It’s been so successful that although we were only supposed to accept 20 students, this year we have 26,” said Dr. Rosa Chaviano-Moran, Assistant Dean of Admissions.

Before he started SMDEP, Nico Olaverria Salvaggione wasn’t entirely sure whether he wanted to go to medical school or dental school, but the program helped convince him to pursue dentistry.

“I think oral health is important,” said Salvaggione, who attends Ohio State University.

Tendai Dandajena, a University of Tulsa student whose dentist father is a department head in the School of Oral Science at Wits University of South Africa, has known for a few years that she wants to follow the “tooth path,” as she called it.

But SMDEP was invaluable to her, she said. “I love this program. I’ve learned so much more about getting into dental school than I would have if I just applied myself. You can ask people who are older about dental school, but it’s not the same as
Gateway Keepers

This year’s Gateway For Dentistry students learned what it takes to become a dentist as they watched clinicians in action and tried out new skills on RSDM dental mannequins.

Aida and Messay Ibrahim, twins from Colorado State University, participate in a wax up exercise as part of the Gateway program. (photo by Maritza Camacho)

Sharing Knowledge

These second-year postdoctoral students presented their research projects to a receptive audience at the New Jersey Academy of Pediatric Dentistry annual meeting in East Brunswick last month, where they also had a chance to network with private practice dentists and learn about organized dentistry.
Honor Student

It’s easy for Yanelis Perez to name her favorite moment as an RSDM student. She remembers the patient whose tooth appeared beyond repair, but rather than extracting it, Perez undertook the complicated process of reconstructing it. “I said, no, I want to give it a try,” she remembers. The desire to help her patient by challenging herself taught Perez the value of trusting her instincts. The story also illustrates why Perez was awarded the Pierre Fouchard Scholarship, given to a third-year student who shows “integrity, imagination, initiative and communication skills.” Perez was also chosen for her potential as a leader in the profession, her involvement within the dental school community and her academic achievements.

The Big Screen

RSDM faculty, students and staff hosted the school’s annual oral cancer screening in May as part of an effort to save lives through early detection. The event, at which hundreds were screened, also raised awareness of the prevalence of the disease -- 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with oral cancer each year -- and risk factors, such as smoking and drinking.
In Memoriam

The RSDM community remembered William R. Cinnotti, a former associate dean and professor emeritus, who passed away in January. At a May memorial service held at the Oral Health Pavillion, Dean Cecile A. Feldman and others shared memories of his life and career. For much of his professional life, Dr. Cinnotti had a dental practice in Jersey City, but he also opened 13 clinics in South Jersey for the underserved. Teaching dentistry at RSDM was his passion. Dr. Cinnotti, 87, was born in Jersey City and was an Army veteran and major in the National Guard. He died in Juno, Florida on January 17. He is survived by his wife, Doris, his daughter and son-in-law, Patricia Susan and Dr. Eric Moum; his three granddaughters, Elizabeth, Katherine and Sarah; his brother, Dr. Alfonse Cinnotti; and two sisters, Norma and Arlene.

Announcements

— Dr. Valerie Rico, DMD, was appointed last month as Assistant Director for Academic Affairs. She will direct the post graduate core curriculum, in addition to revamping and directing the Intro to Clinical Dentistry and Clinical Dentistry courses. An RSDM alumna and graduate of our From Practice to Preceptor (FP2P) program, Rico, who has 25 years of private practice experience, has had a voluntary faculty appointment with RSDM since 2012, and most recently taught as part of the CODE II program at Galloway.

— Dr. August Pellegrini, Assistant Dean, was appointed to the Board of Directors of Matheny Hospital in May.

— Dr. Arnold Rosenheck, who retired in May as Assistant Dean of Extramural and Hospital Affairs, was awarded the Sy Simanski Lifetime Achievement Award last month by the New Jersey Dental Association.
The Graduates

While RSDM’s Class of 2014 graduated in May, a smaller group also celebrated a milestone. The inaugural class of our From Practice to Preceptor (FP2P) program, which began in 2012, completed their education. FP2P, created to address a nationwide shortage of dental school faculty, trains general and pediatric dentists to become faculty members. Over two years, FP2P’s first graduates participated in more than 200 lectures, hands-on clinical education sessions and learned about teaching and administration. After all that, they’re well-prepared to educate the next wave of dental students.

Poster Prize

Dr. Samin Nawaz placed fourth out of 100 poster presenters earlier this month at the American Association of Endodontics conference in Washington DC. Great job!
Catching up with Alumni

Thanks for the Memories

The Class of ’64 marked their 50th anniversary at an RSDM reunion held at NJPAC in May.

Al Fresco

Alums and friends of RSDM mingle on the patio at the New Jersey Dental Association conference in Atlantic City in June.