



TENNESSEE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024 VOLUME 30, ISSUE 5

DENTAL

ASSOCIATION NEWS

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024
VOLUME 30, ISSUE 5

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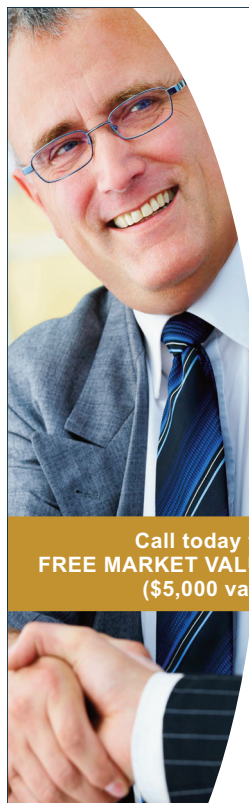


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Insights

FROM DR. CAWTHON: THE 2024-2025 NEW DENTIST COMMITTEE CHAIR



Dr. Iysha Cawthon, a Clarksville pediatric dentist, is serving as the 2024-2025 chair of the New Dentist Committee. With a deep love for working with children and a commitment to shaping their dental health from an early age, Dr. Cawthon brings a unique perspective to her role. In this Q&A, she shares her journey into dentistry, what inspired her to specialize in pediatrics, and her goals for the upcoming year. Dr. Cawthon also reflects on the vital role pediatric dentists play in promoting public health and building lifelong healthy habits, as well as the challenges and opportunities dentists face in an evolving industry.

BACKGROUND &

PATH INTO DENTISTRY

Can you share a bit about your background and what first inspired you to pursue a career in dentistry?

I am originally from Huntsville, Alabama, but moved to Washington, D.C., when I was young. I completed dental school and my pediatric residency at the University of Maryland and worked as an attending at a hospital in the area. I always envisioned myself in a career where I would be able to give back to my community through healthcare delivery. I love sciences and art and feel as though dentistry is the perfect career, blending the two disciplines.

“

I always envisioned myself in a career where I would be able to give back to my community through healthcare delivery. I love sciences and art...”



Why did you choose pediatric dentistry specifically? What aspects do you find most rewarding?

I had the opportunity to serve the special needs community for over ten years, and I have always loved working with children. I shadowed multiple careers in college and am so grateful to have found the best fit in pediatric dentistry. I enjoy connecting with my patients to provide the most compassionate care and make each dental visit special!

What were some of the key challenges you faced in dental school or early in your career, and how did you overcome them?

Going from undergraduate studies directly to dental school, I believed I was ready to tackle the challenge. However, I quickly realized dental school would require an adjustment unlike any other season of life. I would say to any incoming dental student, give yourself grace and time to adjust, it will soon turn out to be the best time of your life!

Were there any pivotal moments or mentors in your life that guided your decision to specialize in pediatrics?

I will always be so grateful for the mentors I had in residency; each one had a specific impact on my practice. They not only taught me the necessary skills to perform dentistry, but they also fostered a desire to always continue learning, to have confidence in myself, and to always incorporate a little magic and sparkle into practice every day. I am the provider I am because of their guidance, wisdom, and support.

ROLE AS CHAIR OF THE NEW DENTIST COMMITTEE

As the chair of the New Dentist Committee for 2024-2025, what are your main goals for this year?

Mentorship and community have a large impact on how we practice dentistry. The TDA is one large family, and I want to ensure every new dentist has access to mentorship, community, and the support they need as they start their own dental journey.

How do you envision fostering a strong sense of community and support among new dentists?

As a transplant to the area, I initially felt lost without going to school or residency in TN. It wasn't until I got plugged into events with other dentists that I felt a sense of connection and family. I want to ensure every new dentist has access to meet and develop relationships with dentists in the area. It is vital for dentists to be in community together; it is how we continue to develop our skills and achieve better successes for our patients, cases, and the future of dentistry as a whole.

What are some key skills or knowledge areas you believe new dentists should prioritize to be successful in today's environment?

As new dentists, we often compare ourselves to others in our field as a benchmark for where we are supposed to be. I would

advise new dentists not to attempt to emulate anyone else. However, continue to work on developing the fundamental skills taught in dental school and ensure you're delivering the right care to your patient. In time, the speed and skills we all need to be successful will come.

Another focus should be to continue learning and researching on your own. As a dentist, you are going to be inundated with new and novel techniques, products, and armamentariums. Dentistry is an evolving field; we as practitioners need the skill set to research and implement new innovations in our practices. One caveat is that we need to ensure we can understand statistics and studies to not chase every new development but only those that are evidence-based and the best choice for our patients when integrating them into our practices.

DENTISTRY'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH

From your perspective, what role do dentists—especially pediatric dentists—play in the lives of children and their families?

Our position allows us to prepare children for success in developing healthy oral health habits. As pediatric dentists, we are in a position to educate parents on trauma prevention and provide mentorship in healthy lifestyles. Over time, our patients become family, and we get the wonderful opportunity to become a key component in supporting parents as children progress through developmental milestones and stages.

“The TDA is one large family, and I want to ensure every new dentist has access to mentorship, community, and the support they need as they start their own dental journey. As a transplant to the area, I initially felt lost ... It wasn't until I got plugged into events with other dentists that I felt a sense of connection and family.”

How do you think pediatric dentists contribute to setting up children for a lifetime of healthy habits?

We have the unique opportunity to see our patients every six months from a very early age. This allows us to have an impact on the development of healthy oral hygiene habits, specifically teaching and reinforcing oral hygiene at home. We have the opportunity to help educate patients and their parents on healthy eating habits, and I would go so far as to say we play a role in healthy lifestyles such as trauma prevention, i.e., helmet wearing and mouth guards with sports.

**CHALLENGES & DEVELOPMENTS
IN DENTISTRY**

What do you think are the biggest challenges new dentists face today?

I believe new dentists face many challenges as they step into their dental career. One is in finding the right environment to practice. As a new dentist, you want to find the right balance of mentorship and development. Feeling comfortable in the practice you are in is so important, it allows for a more enjoyable career in practice leading to longevity of our careers. I am blessed to work with a practitioner, Dr. Jeannie Beauchamp, who values mentorship and fostering a sense of community among the dental community, and I want that for every new dentist entering their career.

As technology continues to advance, how do you see innovations shaping the future of pediatric dentistry?

I'm excited to see advancements in pediatric dentistry, aiding in both diagnoses and treatment of children, allowing for better patient experiences. As pediatric dentists, our primary goal is to focus on the global health of the child while mitigating pain and dental anxiety to lead the child towards a lifetime of positive perception of dentistry. New developments such as painless injections, integration of lasers into practice, development of new materials, and new research on pulpal therapy have brought an exciting addition to pediatric dentistry. Dentistry has seen a shift towards minimally invasive procedures, and I look forward to seeing a greater emphasis on oral hygiene/homecare and healthy diet and lifestyles integrated into our daily practices as practitioners. Parental engagement, through motivational interviewing, has taken a front seat in helping parents make long-standing positive changes.

What trends or developments in the dental industry do you think will have the biggest impact on how care is delivered in the next decade?

As artificial intelligence begins to gain ground in many sectors, I expect

to see a future integration in dentistry with treatment planning and diagnoses, leading to improved patient outcomes and more proactive approaches. I look forward to seeing teledentistry utilized more, specifically in areas with limited access to specialty care. I anticipate laser dentistry being integrated more into practice as an added non-invasive approach to delivering dental care.

**LEADERSHIP & PERSONAL
GROWTH**

What motivates you as a leader, and how do you balance your leadership responsibilities with your work as a pediatric dentist?

My grandfather always told me to never climb high enough on the ladder of success that I don't have the room to bring someone else up with me. I believe we all are the future of dentistry. We are the ones who will ensure our patients will receive the care they need to thrive and have healthy lifestyles. If only a select few are a part of that process, we won't have the ability for continued growth or longevity. I believe if we have skills, we can teach them and share them with others. That is why I love to provide lectures to Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) residents to ensure they have the foundational knowledge to feel confident in treating pediatric patients they will encounter in their daily practice. Additionally, I firmly believe we are in a wonderful position to be leaders in our communities; we need to give back to the communities that support and give so much to us.

Can you share a specific moment in your career where you felt you made a significant impact on a patient's life?

If I am being honest, there are so many moments each day that I am grateful to be a pediatric dentist. Seeing a child excited to come to the dentist and invested in their oral health is enough for me to feel I am positively impacting a child's life.

I used to run a children's non-profit mobile dental clinic. We were able to serve elementary schools in areas that had a lack in access to dental care. A third grader, who had never received dental care, came onto my mobile clinic for an exam. He had multiple abscesses, unrestorable teeth, and several areas of active decay that needed immediate treatment. I asked the little one if he was in any pain, and he stated that he was, but didn't feel he could tell his mother as he knew she didn't have the "money to take me to see a dentist." I went around the corner and cried my eyes out. No child should feel they must suffer with dental pain due to finances. We are in a wonderful position to make a change for the better. We may not be able to change the world, but we can change the world for our patients.

THANK *You!*

FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

The ADA, TDA, and your local component are dedicated to supporting your personal and professional growth throughout your career journey.

We provide invaluable resources to assist you in managing your patients, practice, and personal life effectively. From staying updated with the latest clinical guidelines to accessing financial management tools such as insurance and retirement plans, we ensure you have everything necessary to maintain balance in your work and life.

If there is anything we can do to enhance your membership experience, please call us at 615.628.0208 or email tda@tndental.org. We'd love to hear from you!

The TDA welcomes the following dentists as our new and reinstated members.

First District Dental Society

Dr. Dillon Cutshaw
Dr. Chad Diminick
Dr. Olivia Fast

Second District Dental Society

Dr. Irene Duck
Dr. Alexis Goodson
Dr. Barbara Hernandez
Dr. Niki Patel
Dr. Mark Pozega
Dr. Benjamin Vilensky

Chattanooga Area Dental Society

Dr. Austin Toler

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Dr. Leya Gouto
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MEMBER EMAIL ADDRESS UPDATE

ARE YOU RECEIVING EMAILS FROM THE TDA?

If you have unsubscribed to TDA emails in the past you may be missing important information from the TDA and the ADA. Each week the TDA sends a news bulletin with numerous alerts to keep members informed of the latest updates at the local, state, and national level.

If you have not received emails from the TDA, please make sure to check your spam or junk mail folder and mark tda@tndental.org as a safe sender. To be included in the mailing list or to update your email address please email us at tda@tndental.org.



IN MEMORIAM

The TDA honors the memory and passing of the following members:

Dr. Robert Rowe Jr.

Dr. Rowe Jr. was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the First District Dental Society.

Dr. James "Jamie" Hutton III

Dr. Hutton III was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Sixth District Dental Society.

Dr. Morris Robbins

Dr. Robbins was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Memphis Dental Society. Dr. Robbins served as TDA President from 1999 - 2000.

Dr. Joe Mosier

Dr. Mosier was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Chattanooga Area Dental Society.

Dr. David Morton

Dr. Morton was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Eighth District Dental Society.

Dr. Winfield Dunn, 43rd Governor Of Tennessee.

Governor Dunn was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Memphis Dental Society.



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(423) 552-0222

firstdistrictdental@gmail.com

Second District Dental Society

Executive Director: Janet Lawlor

(865) 919-6464

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Chattanooga Area Dental Society

Executive Director: Lacey Heftka

(423) 886-9191

Info@ChattAreaDent.com

Nashville Dental Society

Executive Director: Kristen Stewart

(615) 628-3300

director@nashvilledental.org

Seventh District Dental Society

Executive Secretary: Dr. Larry Chambers

(731) 217-5614

7thdistrictdental@gmail.com

Eighth District Dental Society

Executive Secretary: Ruby Batson

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Thanks to the unwavering support of the following individuals and organizations, we have collectively raised **\$30,069** in contributions for the TDA Foundation. Your remarkable generosity has enabled The TDAF to persistently advance its mission of promoting dental health programs and education, fostering public awareness about dentistry, providing financial support for dental scholarships, and supporting dental research and related organizations.

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PROTECT YOUR EYE HEALTH

ARE YOUR EYES TIRED, DRY, OR ACHY?

Many factors can contribute to these types of symptoms. But a big culprit can be intense use of your eyes. Spending too much time looking at screens and held devices, like smartphones, can strain your eyes. So can normal aging. What can you do to find relief?

One major cause of eye discomfort is not blinking enough. “When we focus on tasks like reading or computer work, our blink rate just plummets,” says Dr. Chantal Cousineau-Krieger, an NIH ophthalmologist.

Not blinking enough can cause your eyes to become dry and uncomfortable. Certain people are more prone to eye dryness, too. This includes those over age 50, women, and people who wear contact lenses. Certain medications, like antihistamines, and health conditions can also add to eye dryness.

Avoiding other factors that increase eye dryness may help your eyes feel better, too. Air blowing directly in your face from a fan or from air vents in the car can contribute to eye dryness, says Cousineau-Krieger. So can smoke or windy conditions.



Normal aging can also lead to eye strain. With age, we start to lose our ability to focus on close objects. This is called presbyopia. Our eyes need to work harder to focus.

“When we look at something up close, we flex the muscle inside of our eye,” Cousineau-Krieger explains. “And just like any other muscle, if you hold the contraction for a long time, the muscle can become fatigued. Eventually, in your 40s, you end up not being able to see things up close as well. It’s a natural part of aging that goes along with gray hairs and wrinkles. And then we typically need reading glasses to be able to see things up close.”

But eye strain doesn’t only happen to adults. Children can also develop symptoms from intensely using their eyes. They may not tell you that their eyes hurt. Instead, they may start blinking forcefully or rubbing their eyes.



Spending too much time on screens is also now believed to be contributing to children developing nearsightedness. Studies have shown growing rates of nearsightedness in children over the past few decades.

To relieve eye discomfort, you can try some simple steps. Experts recommend the 20-20-20 rule. Take eye breaks every 20 minutes and look far in the distance, about 20 feet away, for about 20 seconds.

"Experts are recommending that children spend time outdoors playing to help them focus on things further at a distance," says Cousineau-Krieger. "Hopefully, this will also help decrease the amount of nearsightedness. The amount of nearsightedness is going up around the world."

Taking screen breaks and focusing on more distant objects can be helpful for everyone's eye health. If simple lifestyle changes don't bring you relief from eye discomfort, it may be time to see a doctor for an eye exam.

Source: NIH News in Health. For the latest news from the National Institute of Health, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, visit [newsinyourhealth.nih.gov](https://www.newsinyourhealth.nih.gov).

WISE CHOICES

REST YOUR EYES. Take a break from tasks that require focusing on nearby objects every 20 minutes, and look at something about 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

LIMIT SCREEN TIME AND TAKE BREAKS OFTEN. Encourage kids to spend more time outdoors and focus on things in the distance.

KEEP YOUR EYES MOIST. Use eye drops called artificial tears when your eyes feel dry.

PREVENT THE AIR IN YOUR HOME FROM GETTING TOO DRY. Use a humidifier. Limit air conditioning.

WEAR SUNGLASSES WHEN OUTSIDE. Choose sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB radiation.

KEEP YOUR EYEGLASSES AND/OR CONTACTS PRESCRIPTION CURRENT. Learn how to properly care for your contacts.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE. Drink plenty of water, eat healthy, and get enough physical activity. Healthy habits can lower your risk for diseases and conditions that lead to eye or vision problems.

QUIT SMOKING AND KEEP YOUR HOME SMOKE-FREE. Get free help at [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov), 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), or by texting QUIT to 47848.



NEW DENTIST CORNER



The pursuit of excellence: Overcoming perfectionism in dentistry

Dentistry represents the perfect intersection between scientific precision and artistic creativity.

It is not simply about treating teeth; dentists are artists who blend their understanding of biological sciences with exceptional artistic skills to craft smiles that suit every face, making dentistry the beaming face of medicine. As dentists, our training involves working on extremely small areas, often no larger than a few millimeters. We understand how even a minuscule difference can dramatically alter a patient's appearance, which can lead to meticulous overthinking and a relentless pursuit of perfection.

Even when you create a stunning smile, you may only be able to focus on a quarter-millimeter discrepancy that's visible to others only under magnification. This attention to detail can lead to frustration or regret over hours of effort, even though the result is excellent from the patient's perspective (and might even impress other dentists). This never-ending quest for perfection is the foundation of our high standards and causes us to continuously push the boundaries of precision and excellence in dentistry.

THE PERILS OF PERFECTIONISM

What is perfectionism? It's the continuous search for flawlessness and the rejection of anything short of it. The problem, though, is that when you seek perfection, your goals continually change and are always just out of reach. Think of it as a race where the finish line is always three steps ahead, no matter how long you run. This drive for perfection might initially motivate young achievers by offering a lofty goal to strive for. However, it can gradually become toxic as it depletes your energy, causes feelings of chronic inadequacy and makes the accomplishments that you do reach less joyful because they never reach your idea of "perfect." As the saying goes, courtesy of Winston Churchill, "Perfection is the enemy of progress." The relentless pursuit of perfection can be damaging to your mental health, often leading to stress, anxiety and depression. Furthermore, if you're constantly seeking perfection in one area, you may miss other opportunities that make your professional and personal lives rewarding and enjoyable.

RECALIBRATE YOUR PERCEPTIONS

When the search for perfection becomes too much, recalibrate your perceptions — remember that perfection is only an illusion, but striving for excellence is possible. It's a small shift, only a single word, but it's enough to reframe your mind and prevent the unavoidable burnout associated with the quest for perfectionism.

In my own journey, I have learned that, ultimately, God will bring about what is meant to be, and I will receive what I deserve, even if it isn't the perfect outcome I initially envisioned. In my culture, we emphasize balance, saying, "Moderation is the adornment of matters," highlighting that finding equilibrium is key to achieving true fulfillment. Shifting my focus toward inner peace and excellence rather than perfection has been transformative. This change has allowed me to grow, mature and gain wisdom, focusing on the best outcomes for everyone rather than selfishly seeking perfection.

Dealing with comparisons has been crucial in this journey. Some people seem to have everything perfectly done and portray life as flawless, making you question, "What's wrong with me?" There's a saying, "He exaggerates and makes a big fuss out of a tiny thing," which captures this well. Some do this intentionally, while others do it unintentionally to feel happy. I learned not to judge others and to take only the positive aspects from these portrayals, focusing on my progress without unrealistic comparisons. Often, I hesitate to try things because they are marketed as extraordinary feats. However, when I finally attempt them, I realize they are neither as difficult nor as impressive as portrayed. This understanding has helped me approach challenges with a balanced perspective, focusing on my capabilities and progress.

“Find **hobbies outside of work** that bring you joy, help manage your stress and allow you to step out of the work headspace.”

CREATE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF YOUR WORK

Loving your work and being proud of what you do is natural, but it's important to remember that dentistry is just one aspect of your identity. Allocate time for rest, social activities and breaks to maintain a well-rounded work-life balance. You'll perform better at work when you give yourself ample time away from it. The term “work-life balance” is used a lot, but it's a myth — you cannot treat both equally. Instead, you can strive for harmony by aligning your actions with your unique values, goals and life circumstances.

Find hobbies outside of work that bring you joy, help manage your stress and allow you to step out of the work headspace. Whether it's playing football (or should I say, soccer), hiking or learning a musical instrument, engaging in activities you love can remind you there's more to life than career “perfection.”

VOLUNTEER

Finding fulfillment often means looking beyond perfection, and volunteering can be a key to this realization. Giving back to the community, especially to those underserved, shows that perfection isn't necessary to make a positive impact. Furthermore, sharing your knowledge and mentoring others can foster positive

changes, reinforcing the idea that everyone has something valuable to offer.

Volunteering provides a sense of purpose and perspective. By focusing on the needs of others and tackling real-world problems, you'll see that the value you bring isn't reliant upon flawless performance, and success can be found solely with continual progress. Volunteering fosters empathy, reduces stress and builds community connections, enhancing personal growth and well-being. It promotes a balanced outlook on life and achievements, which is particularly beneficial for high-stress professions like dentistry, where perfectionism is common.

STEER CLEAR OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMPARISONS

“Comparison is the thief of joy.” — Theodore Roosevelt. Social media is a double-edged sword; it connects us with others but also puts our colleagues' achievements on display, often without revealing how many struggles they faced along the way. This creates a distorted reality where we compare our behind-the-scenes to others' highlight reels.

While social media offers opportunities for networking and professional growth, the curated perfection seen online can lead to unrealistic expectations and feelings of

inadequacy, contributing to stress, imposter syndrome and burnout. To avoid these toxic effects, it's crucial to approach social media mindfully. Reflect on your journey and acknowledge your unique challenges and milestones without comparing them to others'. Your path is uniquely yours, and any progress you make is noteworthy.

DITCH THE IDEA OF PERFECT

Perfectionism often does more harm than good. It can cause career stagnation, drive self-deprecating thoughts and foster imposter syndrome, all in the interest of creating something unattainable: perfection. If your goals always feel out of reach, take time to reevaluate and possibly dial them back to the realm of realism. Remember, while perfection is an illusion, excellence is something tangible to strive for. Reshape your perception, embrace your imperfections and see how excellence, not perfection, is the true path to professional and personal fulfillment.

By understanding the perfectionist mindset and implementing these strategies, we can transform our approach to dentistry. Embrace progress and self-compassion to find fulfillment in our achievements and enjoy the journey toward excellence without the burden of perfectionism.

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