

SEASON'S GREETINGS



Season's Greetings from the Birmingham District Dental Society



Dear Friends and Colleagues

I hope this letter finds you and yours safe, happy and sound this Holiday Season. Since we are halfway through this year's tenure, I wanted to provide an update on where our district stands on our financial health and monthly meetings. Originally, I planned to mail out a hard copy of this letter; however, with the Executive Council's (EC) decision to stop monthly mail outs last May, I thought it was prudent that I follow suit. This brings up the most important topic - finances.

A complete copy of our financial report is available at our website, www.bdds.org. If you have difficulty accessing or viewing our website, please contact Richard, our Executive Director, and he will gladly assist you. I am happy to report that over the last two years, the leadership examined every possible expense and has trimmed where possible. Our ship is now running as lean and mean as practical. Based on the progress we have made, our district should be back on solid footing by this time next year.

My next topic is attendance at our monthly meetings. When I graduated in 2001, our meetings were held at Hoover Country Club and attendance averaged about 70 to 75. When we moved our meetings to the Summit Club, average attendance had dropped to less than 60 per meeting. Initially, we experienced a rise in attendance and most of the council believed the increase was related to having the meetings at a more central location. Unfortunately, average attendance at the last two spring meetings and this fall's meetings has decreased to about 40. This number of attendees does not allow us to break even on the meeting costs. We must have at least 45 attendees.

For the last nine (9) years of my service to the district, this topic has been debated every year. If one were to ask 10 different people on why this has occurred, you would get 10 different answers. Personally, I believe it is a paradigm shift in thinking. The majority of the dentists that enjoy the meetings and attend regularly are retired or in the twilight of their careers. Earlier in their careers, these meetings were as much a social function as they were for continuing education. I identify with this demographic of our society. I have always viewed the meetings much more as a time of fellowship than something that will improve my practice of dentistry. The fact that I get an hour of CE for spending time and eating dinner with my friends is just an extra benefit. Now, for the crowd that has graduated less than twenty years ago, the mindset is that if they have a free moment in their schedule, dinner with colleagues is second on the docket to quality family time. I also understand this point of view because there are two nights a month that I miss my sons' soccer practice. The EC has wrestled with this dilemma for a long time and there is no easy answer. We have considered bimonthly, quarterly and all day Friday meetings to try to increase participation. During a straw poll held at the last EC meeting, a substantial majority said they wanted to change our meeting structure.

Three years ago, as most know, I combined my office with Dr. James Reed's. We discussed attendance today at work. He used the annual Christmas Party as an example of dwindling attendance. He said early in his career, the party was a huge social event and everyone attended. He said that over the years the numbers just gradually dropped off. I believe the last year we had a Christmas Party was 2001. He believed that when he graduated the number of dentists in Jefferson and Shelby counties were less than half of what they are today. We agreed that it is easier to have a tighter more cohesive group when the numbers are smaller. He could not give me a specific reason as to why he does not attend anymore, just that after a while, he just did not want to go. He then said maybe it was because his friends quit attending. Here lies the rub, everyone knows there is an attendance problem and our dilemma is we do not have specific problem area to combat. As a side note, when I graduated dental school, I was older than most and determined to practice by myself. Now that Dr. Reed has returned work, I can honestly say that I enjoy having a partner much more than practicing by myself.

The Past Presidents have discussed sending monthly bulletins; however, the elimination of the mail out is one of the cost cutting measures that have allowed us to right the ship. We have stated all along that anyone who wanted one could request a monthly bulletin be mailed but a general mail out is not possible at this time.

The second idea is to move the meetings to a new venue. When we are short on attendees (less than 45), we lose on average \$250 at the Summit Club. We had discussed moving the meeting to The Club but, if our attendance remains the same we would lose about \$500. I could not support such a large loss per month, especially with the financial shape of the district. As long as we can limit our losses we will continue to have monthly meetings at the Summit and the only way that would or could change is if we can increase our participation by changing our meeting schedule.

With all that being said, if you enjoy the fellowship of the monthly meetings, please attend as many as you can. We welcome anyone that would like to attend our January EC meeting to discuss any thoughts or ideas on how to improve attendance, or if you have any thoughts or ideas on how to improve our district in general. If you are unable to attend but have suggestions, please contact me or another EC member.

I have also included a schedule of our remaining meetings for the year:

Monthly Meetings

January	Dr. Pamela Sims
February	Dr. Ken Tilashaski
March	TBA
April	Dr. Richard Weems State of ALDA
May	State of the School and short CE

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month at the Summit Club with social time beginning at 5:30pm and dinner/speaker at 6:15pm.

In addition to our monthly meetings, we are planning an all day seminar with Dr. Carl Misch tentatively scheduled in May.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Robert

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January 3rd Speaker Meeting Signup



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