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Stay Active and Get Involved

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STAY ACTIVE AND GET INVOLVED

Dr. Dustin Reynolds

Greetings, fellow members! By the time you read this, we will be well into the dog days of summer. I hope that you each can take time away from your practice for family vacations and all the activities warmer weather brings as well as take time for yourselves for both physical and mental well-being. As I reflect on the past year that has flown by, like most do these days, I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as your VDA President. Together, we have accomplished milestones. I have had the opportunity to visit many of our component societies and am confident that the VDA is poised for success in the years to come!

I recently had the privilege of giving the commencement address to the dental and dental hygiene students at the VCU School of Dentistry's graduation. It was a humbling experience to see this generation of healthcare providers take the next step toward what will be a rewarding and fulfilling career. During my address, I gave the graduates four pearls of wisdom that I think we should all apply to our lives.

Pearl Number One: Surround yourself with the right people, whether this is your office staff, colleagues, professional team of accountants and attorneys, or simply your friends. Mark Twain reminds us that we should "keep away from people who belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you too can become great." Find people in your circle that lift you up and support you.

Pearl Number Two: Reward yourself. Dentistry is a demanding profession both physically and mentally. One of my mentors told me that no matter what, once a quarter, do something other than dentistry. Whether it is taking a day off to spend time with your family, taking a hike, going fishing, going shopping, or taking a trip, a change of scenery can do the mind and body good.

Pearl Number Three: Build on the foundation that you have learned in dental school. Graduation signifies the beginning of your career. The education received in school provides you with enough knowledge to be dangerous. Be sure to stay up to date on continuing education and technology. Dentistry is constantly evolving and changing. Never stop learning. A new chapter in life is like a clean slate, full of possibilities and opportunities. Do something today that your future self will thank you for.

Pearl Number Four: Become involved in organized dentistry. Keep your membership active in the national, state, and local dental associations. Organizations such as the VDA are the voice of organized dentistry where, often, accomplishments and advancements are made behind the scenes. Local and state government officials rely on organizations like ours to provide insight, advice, and information on subject matter most know nothing about. Remember, there is strength in numbers. The VDA has successfully sponsored legislation that literally allows us to practice with the best interest of our patients, staff, and community in mind. If we do not continue to stand up for ourselves so that our voices are heard, you can bet that there will come a time when we no longer have these freedoms, and we will be told how to practice.

I want to add one additional pearl of wisdom to this list. I recently attended the funeral of my childhood best friend's mother, who passed suddenly and unexpectedly. While we were gathered during a time of sadness, we were also there to celebrate the life of a woman who touched so many. As the pastor gave the eulogy, he made the comment that we often measure a person's life by the number of years they were here on Earth. Other times, their life is measured by the number of children, grandchildren,

or nieces and nephews they had. I was reminded that this would be an inaccurate way to describe the life someone lived. Rather, we should measure a person's time on the third rock from the sun by the amount of LOVE they gave. I encourage each of you to be remembered not by the number of years you have been in your profession or here on Earth but rather by the amount of love you have shown to your families, patients, staff, communities, friends, and to yourselves.

During my time as President, I have enjoyed being able to connect with other like-minded individuals both here in the Commonwealth as well as in North and South Carolina which, along with Virginia, make up the 16th District. I am looking forward to exciting collaboration opportunities! In addition to our neighboring colleagues and our wonderful members, I cannot say enough about our incredibly talented staff at VDA Headquarters! We have the best staff in the world, and they have been a pleasure to work with. I encourage each of you to make it a point to get involved and attend VDA events so that you make this association your own. Organizations are often like other areas in life in that you truly get out what you put in. Engage your peers by encouraging membership, and make sure that you utilize all the available resources so that you get the most out of your membership. My time in leadership has been rewarding and fulfilling, both personally and professionally. Despite the lack of compensation and the insane amount of time this position requires, I still encourage you to become involved in leadership! There is much work left to be done and many challenges we will continue to face. I thank each of you for being the reason that the VDA is such a wonderful community supporting organized dentistry in the Commonwealth. I look forward to seeing each of you in September at The Greenbrier for our Dental Showcase! God Bless!