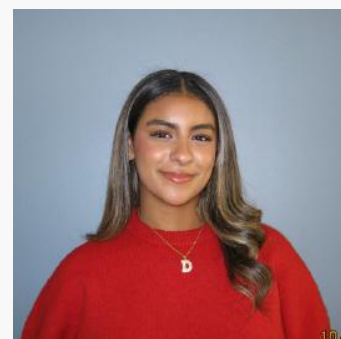


The AAWD Chronicle Quarterly

Built to Last



Wellness, Resilience, & Sustainable Success in Dentistry

Inside: Sustainable Careers • Women Leading Change • Global Impact • Community & Connection

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From the Immediate Past President

Welcome to this issue of The Chronicle, centered on **Built to Last: Wellness, Resilience, & Sustainable Success in Dentistry**. This theme invites us to consider not only the longevity of our careers, but the quality of the lives we build alongside them.

Women in dentistry are often admired for managing many roles and responsibilities. Yet the qualities that help us achieve can make it difficult to step back, say no, or admit that a commitment no longer aligns with our priorities. When so much of our identity becomes connected to what we do for others, setting a boundary can feel selfish.

Throughout my career, I have learned that resilience is not simply the ability to keep going. It is the wisdom to reassess, the courage to change, and the grace to release what no longer supports our purpose. Caring for ourselves does not diminish our commitment to others. It allows us to serve with presence and intention.



AAWD gives women a community for navigating change and growth. Through mentorship, friendship, leadership, and shared experience, we remind one another that seeking support is a strength and that success can evolve as we do. As you read this issue, I encourage you to reconsider one commitment that may no longer serve you and create space for what does. May we continue building careers grounded in purpose, supported by community, and aligned with the lives we want to lead. Lasting success is not only about what we accomplish. It is about who we become.

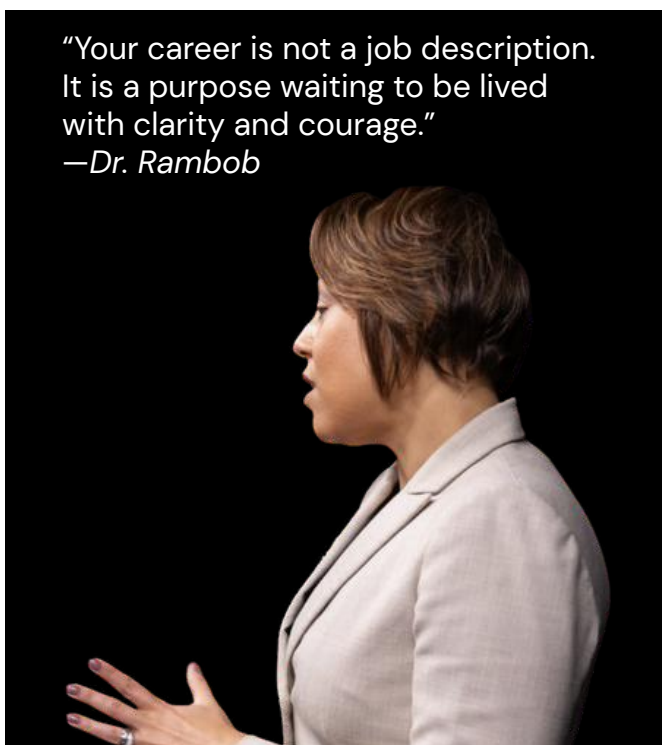
All my best,

Dr. Isabel Rambob

AAWD Immediate Past President

"Your career is not a job description. It is a purpose waiting to be lived with clarity and courage."

—Dr. Rambob



Built to Last

Four women. Four career stages. Four perspectives on what sustainable success really means.

There is no single blueprint for a sustainable career in dentistry. Success can mean embracing an unexpected path, leaning on the people around us, protecting our limited time and energy, or learning early to build a career that leaves room for life beyond it. We invited four women at different stages of their professional journeys to reflect on what sustainable success means to them — and what they have learned about building a career that can evolve and endure.

The Gift of Your Own Time

By Dr. Rachelle Nowlin

I don't even know if I can count myself as "successful" at this point!

Service is at the heart of our profession and at the core of my personal philosophy. After retiring from 22 years of active duty, I became a faculty member and clinic director, and I still feel like I serve the students and the university. I teach because I want students to see that there is joy in our very serious profession. I describe myself as "Everyone's Biggest Fan" — and I mean it.

So how do I measure success? Is my family making it to their activities, with what they need? Do we have financial security? Are we checking a few things off the bucket list? Those things matter to me.

So do friends. When your spouse, tiny grabby creatures, students, clients, needy nonprofits, and all the other beeping icons on the screen are screaming for your attention, turn it off and go for coffee with a good friend. Listen. Vent. Take a break.

Your life and your time are your greatest assets to give. Decide what matters most and make sure you devote the right amount of "you space" to getting there. **Allow yourself to have the gift of your own time.**



The Strength of Your Village

By Frederica "Rica" Mackert, DDS, MHA

My path into academic dentistry was not one I initially imagined for myself. After practicing in community health in Washington, I moved across the country when my husband began VCU's Endodontics residency program. Leaving behind a career and community that I loved was difficult. Yet within that uncertainty, I found an opportunity to pursue my long-standing interest in academia. I began as a part-time adjunct faculty member and quickly discovered a calling that brought together everything I valued most about dentistry: teaching, mentorship, service, and lifelong learning.

Growing up, my grandmother often reminded me of the Japanese phrase *okagesamade*, meaning, "I am who I am because of you." I did not fully appreciate its significance as a child. Today, it sits at the heart of how I view my journey. My career has been made possible by mentors who guided me, colleagues who encouraged me, and family and friends who supported me when I needed them most.

My advice to women dentists is to **build your village, and let others be a part of your journey.** Success is rarely achieved alone. *Okagesamade* reminds me that our greatest accomplishments are often shared, and that there is profound strength, gratitude, and joy in growing together.

Built to Last

continued

The Courage to Evolve

By Bhargavi Marupaka

For me, success at this stage of my career is not about proving how far I have come; it is about discovering how much further I can grow. I see success as building a practice that can grow with me—one that challenges me, gives me purpose, and allows me to make a difference in my patients' lives.



I began my dental career in India and pursued advanced training in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Moving to the United States meant entering a new professional system and learning to see dentistry from a different perspective. The biggest challenge was not starting over. It was learning to trust that the experience I had already gained still had value, while remaining open to everything I had yet to learn.

There were moments of uncertainty, but they taught me that progress does not always look like a straight line. I kept moving forward by staying curious, gaining U.S. clinical experience, volunteering, and surrounding myself with people who encouraged my growth.

Today, I define sustainable success as **having the courage to evolve without losing sight of your purpose**. It means remaining a lifelong learner and caring for patients with the same attention I would want for my own family.

Being part of AAWD reminds me that professional growth is more powerful when we support and learn from one another. As a woman and an internationally trained dentist, I hope my story reminds others that taking a different path does not make the destination any less meaningful.



The Freedom to Choose

By Souad Menif

I used to think success meant working harder. Then health challenges and burnout in dental school made me question how long I could keep going that way.

For me, **sustainable success means having the freedom to choose** where I invest my time without constantly worrying about money. I want to enjoy dentistry and build a career that fits me.

That is part of why I started Medica Ink, a LinkedIn ghostwriting and personal branding agency for healthcare professionals, alongside my studies.

Balancing both has taught me to ask for help. There is no shame in using notes from senior students, learning from someone further ahead, or delegating work. We do not have to figure everything out alone.

I am also more protective of my time. I say no more often and pay attention to what fills my cup and what drains it.

But the lesson I wish I had learnt earlier is that feedback on my work is not a judgement of my worth. A restoration that needs improving does not make me less valuable as a person.

I am not yet where I want to be. But I am taking steps towards a career I can enjoy and sustain.

AAWD Launches First Pre-Dental Chapter in Boston

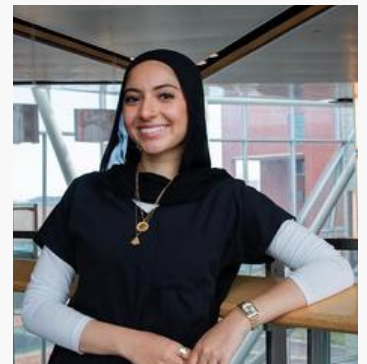


AAWD is thrilled to announce the establishment of its first Pre-Dental Chapter in Boston, launched in July 2026. The milestone marks an exciting expansion of AAWD's mission to encourage, support, and inspire women to pursue dentistry as their career.

For more than 105 years, AAWD has championed women in dentistry. With the launch of its first Pre-Dental Chapter, AAWD is extending that legacy to future dental professionals at the undergraduate level—creating new opportunities for mentorship, community, and leadership from the very beginning of their journey into dentistry.

The Boston chapter is led by a founding executive board of aspiring dental professionals committed to building community, connection, and leadership opportunities for women pursuing dentistry.

Meet the Founding Executive Board



Amina El-Tobgui, President; Dania Ramadan, Vice President; Carlin (Carly) Fitzgerald, Secretary; and Aya Mahrous, Treasurer.

To our Pre-Dental students in Boston: welcome to the AAWD family. Your future in dentistry starts now.

Your AAWD Community Starts Here

Being part of AAWD connects Pre-Dental members to a community of women at every stage of the dental journey. Through the **AAWD Member Portal**, you can connect with dental students and practicing dentists, explore AAWD Student Chapters, and access resources to help you learn more about the profession and prepare for what comes next.

Start building your network now. Log in to the Member Portal to explore the AAWD community, find resources, and make connections that can grow with you throughout your career.

[Explore the AAWD Member Portal →](#)

Strength, Purpose, & Connection

Katherine Brice, a D4 student at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, brings together leadership, service, and an unexpected skill set: she is also a fifth-degree black belt. AAWD Director of Member Benefits Dr. Yvette Glina spoke with Brice about dentistry, martial arts, empowering women through self-defense, and the importance of staying connected to purpose as she prepares to enter the profession.



What attracted you to dentistry, and how has your vision of the profession evolved during dental school?

I loved that dentistry combined healthcare with relationships, hands-on work, and the ability to make a tangible difference in someone's life. Whether it's helping someone feel more comfortable, relieving their pain, improving their confidence, or simply making them feel heard, those small moments have become one of the most rewarding parts of dental school for me.

You're a fifth-degree black belt. How has martial arts influenced your experience in dental school?

Taekwondo requires coordination, balance, body control, precision, and being aware of your movements. Those are all incredibly important when you're working in someone's mouth and performing procedures that require very controlled movements. Martial arts also taught me to stay calm under pressure and to think through a situation rather than reacting emotionally.

"Growth often happens when you're willing to step outside of your comfort zone."



You spearheaded a women's self-defense workshop at the 2025 AAWD conference in Baltimore. What did that experience mean to you?

For me, the workshop was about giving women confidence and empowering them to feel more prepared in their everyday lives. I believe every woman should have the opportunity to learn how to protect herself. Being able to use something I've spent so many years learning to give back to other women has been incredibly meaningful to me.

What does it mean to you to be a female leader, and what advice would you give other women preparing to enter the profession?

I've found that growth often happens when you're willing to step outside of your comfort zone. Most importantly, I would tell new graduates to stay connected to the reason they chose dentistry in the first place. As a dental student, I've seen how easy it can be to become focused on grades, productivity, finances, or the pressure to succeed. But for me, the most fulfilling part of dental school has been the opportunity to help people and build meaningful relationships with my patients. I think as we enter the profession, it's important to hold onto that purpose while also supporting one another and creating a profession where women can continue to grow and succeed.



Partners in Your Professional Success

AAWD partners and sister societies are helping members build sustainable careers through education, resources, and opportunities to connect.

Building Financial Confidence

With AAWD Mentor Partner Dentist Advisors



Dentist Advisors

Financial wellness is an important part of building a sustainable career. This fall, AAWD Mentor Partner Dentist Advisors offered two programs to help members make more confident financial decisions at different stages of their careers.

In August, **The 4 Foundations of Financial Health** explored income, debt, saving, investing, and aligning financial decisions with personal priorities.

In September, **4 Big Mistakes New Grads Make That Can Hurt Their Financial Future** focused on student loans, saving, tracking financial progress, and building healthy financial habits early in a dental career.

Missed the live programs? AAWD members can access both recordings in the Member Portal.

[Watch the Recordings →](#)

dandy

Connecting AAWD Members Coast to Coast

With Strategic Visionary Partner Dandy

AAWD and Strategic Visionary Partner Dandy have been bringing members together for connection, conversation, and a look at the technology shaping modern dental practice.

This summer, members gathered for a dinner cruise on Boston Harbor, followed by a September architecture cruise along the Chicago River. Both events created opportunities for women in dentistry to connect with colleagues while learning more about digital workflows and innovation in dental practice.

Next stop: the West Coast! Save the date for AAWD and Dandy's next member event on **November 12, 2026**. More details are coming soon—watch your inbox and AAWD communications for the invitation.

[Explore Dandy → Learn more about Dandy's digital dentistry solutions.](#)

Putting Inclusive Care into Practice

With AAWD Sister Society IEC



In September, AAWD Sister Society, Institute for Exceptional Care (IEC), presented a webinar on practical tools for treating patients with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD). Rachel Grimm, MPH, shared strategies and resources dental teams can use to improve communication, patient experiences, and care.

[AAWD members can watch the recording in the Member Portal →](#)

AAWD Leaders Advance Health Equity at NDA Women's Health Symposium



The National Dental Association (NDA) hosted its 32nd Annual Women's Health Symposium Awards Luncheon on July 18, 2026, during the NDA Convention in Richmond, Virginia. The luncheon was chaired by **Dr. Brandi R. Hair, AAWD Director of Membership & Chapters.**

Under the theme "**Designing Health Equity: Building the Blueprint for Stronger Outcomes,**" the symposium brought together dental professionals, healthcare leaders, and community advocates committed to advancing women's health and equitable healthcare outcomes.

Celebrating Leadership

A highlight of the luncheon was the presentation of the **Phenomenal Leadership Award to Dr. Tawana K. Ware**, 2014 AAWD President. A board-certified pediatric dentist and educator, Dr. Ware has dedicated her career to teaching, leadership, community service, and improving opportunities for underserved populations.



The luncheon also featured keynote speaker **Dr. Uché Blackstock**, physician, health equity advocate, and author of *LEGACY: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine*.

Dr. Suzie Bergman, AAWD President-Elect, joined Drs. Hair and Ware at the event, continuing AAWD's engagement with colleagues and organizations working to support women in dentistry and advance health equity.

Stronger Through Connection

The gathering reflected something at the heart of this issue of *The Chronicle*: sustainable leadership is strengthened through relationships. By showing up across organizations, celebrating one another's achievements, and contributing to conversations that shape the profession, women dentists create connections that extend beyond any single meeting or organization.

AAWD is proud to celebrate the leadership of Drs. Hair, Ware, and Bergman and the growing relationships that help women in dentistry **connect, lead, and create lasting impact.**



Built to Last: Women Leading Sustainable Care in the Amazon

Created by Dr. Kamila Kantovitz and Dr. Eve Desai, Amazon Healthcare brought health, dignity, and hope to 21 riverside and Indigenous communities.



Amazon Healthcare was created by two faculty members at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, Dr. Kamila Kantovitz and Dr. Eve Desai, who share a vision to build an international initiative combining humanitarian care, education, collaboration, and sustainable community impact.

Their leadership reflects the spirit of Built to Last: Wellness, Resilience, & Sustainable Success in Dentistry. The project demonstrates the power of women leaders to transform an idea into meaningful action—building partnerships across institutions, countries, and professions to reach communities facing significant geographical barriers to healthcare.

For five days, the Amazon Healthcare Project navigated the right bank of the Tapajós River in the Santarém region of Brazil, providing dental and medical services to 21 riverside and Indigenous communities.

Care Beyond the Dental Chair

Dentistry was the mission's primary area of action. The team provided dental evaluations, preventive and restorative treatments, extractions, fluoride applications, and oral health education. A multidisciplinary group also delivered medical consultations and medications according to the needs identified in each community.

One of the mission's most meaningful contributions extended beyond the dental chair. Through donations from Instituto Cangado and Rede Drogal, menstrual hygiene products were distributed to more than 250 women.



In communities where these essential products may be difficult or costly to obtain, menstrual supplies represent much more than convenience. They support health, self-confidence, participation in daily life, and dignity. By addressing this often-overlooked need, the project affirmed that women's wellness must be understood comprehensively—and that every woman deserves to care for her body safely and without shame, regardless of where she lives.

Collaboration Across Borders

The expedition united dental students from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry; medical and dental students from Faculdade São Leopoldo Mandic; faculty members, volunteer healthcare professionals, and interpreters; and representatives from the Federal University of Western Pará, the Santarém Municipal Health Department, and the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health.

The University of Maryland's Center for Global Engagement and the Fundação de Integração Amazônica also contributed to the initiative. Supported by RIDH and the Abaré healthcare vessel, the mission received sponsorship from Grupo Martarello, ALPOP, ARIA Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Dentistry, and BFR Uniformes, along with donations of medications, supplies, and hygiene products from additional partners.



Resilience Through Experience

The students discovered that resilience is built through experience. They adapted to intense heat, long clinical days, language differences, limited resources, and unfamiliar surroundings. Working alongside Brazilian teams, they learned to provide care with flexibility, cultural humility, compassion, and respect.

The communities were not simply recipients of care. They were partners and teachers who shared their knowledge, histories, generosity, and extraordinary resilience. This mutual exchange transformed the expedition from a temporary intervention into a foundation for continued learning and collaboration.

“The communities were not simply recipients of care. They were partners and teachers.”

As the Abaré vessel traveled along the Tapajós River, Amazon Healthcare demonstrated what it means to be built to last. It means empowering women to lead, educating professionals who can adapt without losing empathy, and creating partnerships strong enough to continue beyond a single expedition.

When women lead with knowledge, solidarity, and purpose, distance is no longer an obstacle. It becomes a pathway to dignity, resilience, and sustainable change.

Investing in Women. Building a Stronger Future.

Sustainable success in dentistry is built over time—and often with the support of those who came before us.

Since 1930, the **Gillette Hayden Memorial Foundation (GHMF)** has worked to advance women in dentistry by supporting initiatives that strengthen their professional success and leadership.

A gift to GHMF is an investment in the opportunities that help women build lasting careers. Foundation funding supports the ADEA GHMF Women Dentist Faculty Tuition Scholarship, practice management grants for new practice owners, opportunities for women dental students to attend the AAWD Conference, and educational programming on topics such as practice management.

These programs share a common purpose: helping women access the education, community, mentorship, and professional development they need to grow.

As we reflect on what it means to build a career that lasts, GHMF reminds us that sustainable success is strengthened when we invest in one another—and in the women who will shape the future of dentistry.

Help Build What Comes Next

Your support helps GHMF continue creating opportunities for women at every stage of their dental careers. Consider making a gift today and becoming part of a legacy of women supporting women in dentistry. [Donate Today.](#)

New Practice Owner? This Opportunity Is for You.

The GHMF Practice Management Scholarship supports a woman dentist within her first five years of practice ownership with eight one-hour virtual consulting sessions focused on the business of dentistry.

Sessions with Shelly Short of ZumWohl Consulting will address topics including workflows, marketing, leadership development, positive workplace culture, dental economics, team meetings, hiring, scheduling, and stress control. Each session will be recorded, with follow-up reports provided to help the recipient put what she learns into practice.

Application deadline: November 1
[Learn more and apply through the Gillette Hayden Memorial Foundation.](#)

What's in Your Spoon Drawer?

In her contribution, Dr. Rachelle Nowlin reminds us that our time and energy are finite resources. Spoon Theory gives us a tangible way to think—and talk—about those limits. Developed by writer Christine Miserandino to describe living with chronic illness, the metaphor imagines beginning each day with a limited number of “spoons.” Each spoon represented the physical and mental energy required for a task; once the spoons were gone, so was the day’s available energy.

The metaphor is especially useful because not every day begins with the same capacity nor carries the same costs. Something routine may require little energy one day and considerably more on another. Thinking in “spoons” can help make those invisible limits easier to recognize and communicate, while encouraging intentional choices about priorities, boundaries, and rest.

Sustainable success isn’t about using every spoon you have. Building a career and a life that lasts also means recognizing your limits and protecting energy for the people, priorities, and experiences that matter most.

Learn more about Spoon Theory: [Cleveland Clinic](#) | [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#)

AAWD Student Chapters in Action!



AAWD Expands Its Global Community Through New Collaboration with Leading Ladies in Dentistry



AAWD is excited to welcome **Leading Ladies in Dentistry (LLD)** as its newest **Sister Society**. LLD is an international community dedicated to advancing women in dental leadership and developing the next generation of female leaders through education, mentorship, professional development, and global collaboration.

The new Sister Society relationship expands opportunities for women across both organizations to connect across borders, exchange knowledge, grow as leaders, and build greater professional visibility within the global dental community.

Several collaborative initiatives are already taking shape, including a joint educational webinar, new opportunities for members to connect, and AAWD participation in the Leading Ladies in Dentistry 10th Anniversary International Conference, May 14–15, 2027, in Baden–Baden, Germany.

By welcoming LLD into AAWD's Sister Society community, we're creating new opportunities for women in dentistry to connect, learn, lead, and support one another around the world.

[Read the full announcement and learn more about the collaboration.](#)

Give the Gift of Confidence This Giving Tuesday

This Giving Tuesday, you can do more than donate. You can help transform a life.

Established in 1995 by members of the American Association of Women Dentists (AAWD), the Smiles for Success Foundation provides cost-free dental care to women transitioning into the workforce. The foundation supports women working toward financial independence who cannot afford essential dental treatment.

A healthy smile can make a powerful difference during job interviews and career opportunities. By restoring oral health and self-confidence, Smiles for Success helps women present their best selves as they pursue meaningful employment and long-term stability.

This Giving Tuesday, your generosity can help provide life-changing dental care and create new opportunities for women working toward greater independence. Every gift helps someone take an important step toward employment, independence, and hope.

Share Your Smile Challenge Smile. Share. Give \$30.

Post a smiling selfie on social media, donate \$30 in support of Smiles for Success, and tag @aawd1921, @womendentistssmiles, and three friends to join you.

[Donate today and help create more smiles, more confidence, and more success.](#)

Find Your Place in AAWD

Want to get more involved? AAWD members help shape the organization through committees, programs, events, and other volunteer opportunities. Share your interests and let us know how you'd like to contribute.

[→ Get Involved with AAWD](#)

Share Your Skills. Transform a Smile.

Smiles for Success connects women working toward greater independence with volunteer dentists who provide essential dental care at no cost. Dental professionals can make a lasting difference by volunteering their time and expertise.

[→ Volunteer with Smiles for Success](#)

There's More in Your Member Portal

Your AAWD membership goes beyond events and emails. Log in to explore educational recordings, professional resources, the member directory, chapter connections, and more—all designed to support you throughout your career.

[→ Explore the Member Portal](#)

Share Your Expertise & Ideas

AAWD is always looking for members to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives with our community. Have an idea for an educational webinar or a story, insight, or update for a future issue of The AAWD Chronicle Quarterly? We'd love to hear from you.

[→ Submit a Webinar Proposal](#)

[→ Contribute to the Chronicle](#)

Upcoming Events

October

Breast Cancer Awareness
Dental Hygiene Month

15: [AAWD Webinar - Beyond the Tooth](#)

November

TMJ Awareness

12: AAWD + Dandy Event
– TBD

19: [AAWD Webinar - Step Up, Speak Out](#)

December

10: [AAWD State of the Association](#)

We want to hear from you! What events would you like to see AAWD host? [Click here to share your feedback!](#)



Where Connections Become Community

A career built to last isn't built alone. At AAWD, women dentists, students, educators, and leaders find the community, mentorship, and shared experiences that help them navigate every stage of their professional journey. Together, we're building careers grounded in connection, strengthened by support, and made to grow and evolve with us.

 Not a member yet? [Join Now](#)

 Questions? Email us: membership@aawd.org

 @aawd1921

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