

## President's Address by Brenda Marriott, RDH, BS

Our 87<sup>th</sup> Annual MDHA House of Delegates has concluded. I hope that the courses, the camaraderie and the continuity of leadership will transform all of you who attended professionally, personally, and purposefully.

I am honored to have been given this opportunity to serve MDHA as your 88<sup>th</sup> President. I choose for my theme “**BELIEVE & ACHIEVE**”, and the Cherokee symbol of joy, peace and transformation the **BUTTERFLY**.

Did you know the Zebra long wing butterfly feeds on passion flowers and hygienists are passionate about their work? Further, the passion flower is the same lavender color that we adopted as our color in dental hygiene. Color and passion aside, the butterfly, like our profession is an agent of transformation. Just as the butterfly transforms during several stages to reach perfection, dental hygienists go through stages to become professionals. Like caterpillars browsing the leaves of a garden, dental hygiene students are nourished by dental hygiene programs that feed their appetites for learning on an abundance of didactic and clinical offerings. The students cocoon themselves in their final year preparing for the National and State Board Examinations. When they emerge, they are ready to face the professional world as colleagues in dental hygiene. There are so many ways we can transform ourselves and our profession. As oral health has become known as an integral part of total body health, it has become important for us to transform approaches to oral health care by collaborating with other medical professionals to adequately treat patients while educating them about the benefits of good oral health and the profound effects that poor oral health may have on the body.

In order to reach and teach patients, we must transform the culture that denies access to care to so many people. In Michigan there are numerous children, special needs adults and elderly in adult living facilities, assisted living facilities and/or nursing homes not receiving dental care even though there is a direct link between pneumonia and those who are being treated with breathing tubes.

There are so many people who can benefit from preventative oral health services, both young and old, whether those services are nutrition/dietary education, oral health education, screening/charting, prophylaxis, application of fluoride varnish, or application of dental sealants. In fact, evidence based research has established fluoride varnish and dental sealants as gold standards in the fight against dental caries. How can we transform health care so that more individuals are offered the gold standard?

As professionals we strive for better training and better education in our chosen profession. Many of us are transforming ourselves personally and professionally by returning to college for advanced degrees. Many of us are transforming ourselves purposefully by being involved in our professional association.

I urge all of you to get involved in your communities to educate others to the needs of the community. You are the leaders in your chosen profession. Who best knows how to educate about oral health than a dental hygienist?

I urge each of you to get involved in your component organization in a leadership role. We all have busy lives; getting involved helps us to grow personally, professionally and purposefully. As I said in my presidential speech, I had someone ask me if I thought they should run for office. My response to them and to you is: If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

TOGETHER IF WE BELIEVE WE CAN ACHIEVE !

**Brenda Marriott, RDH, BS**

President  
Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association