

# ORAL HEALTH NEVADA NEWSLETTER



*Vision: Empowering All Nevadans to have the best oral health possible.*

*March - April 2015*

**Oral Health Nevada Inc.** is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit charitable organization whose mission is to improve the oral health of all Nevadans - especially those who are the most vulnerable, by expanding access to affordable preventive and restorative services, promoting oral health education, and expanding communication and support through diverse partnerships. [www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com)

## Oral Health Legislative Day April 1, 2015

The state's Legislative Building in Carson City was the setting for the first Oral Health Legislative Day, sponsored by the Community Coalition for Oral Health and the Northern Nevada Dental Coalition for Underserved Populations. The event, attended by community-based organizations, professional associations, legislators and citizens, focused on visits to individual legislators, educating these policy makers on the importance of dental health for all Nevadans, the impact that poor health has on other systems of care due to its relationship with general health and well being, and finally the need for funding to support oral health leadership at the state level.

Attendees were welcomed by Cathie Davenport, Chair of the Community Coalition for Oral Health and Syd McKenzie. The keynote speaker was Christine Wood, RDH, Executive Director, Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors and former Director of Nevada's Chronic Disease Program, which includes the oral health program. In her address, Ms. Wood gave an historical overview of Nevada's Oral Health Program including the state's dental milestones and programs that were established to serve the unserved and underserved statewide. (Cont'd on page 2)

## One Extraordinary Day!

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, Oral Health Nevada joined thousands of non-profits within the state for 24 hours of online giving as part of Nevada's Big Give. Thank you to everyone that supported us, making it one extraordinary day demonstrating that Nevada's Oral Health Matters!



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY**

## APRIL IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MONTH

Occupational Therapy Month began in 1980 to draw attention to the work of professionals who help people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. This is important for dental health because activities of daily living include the regular cleaning of the teeth and gums for improved general health and well-being. About 400,000 Nevadan adults are considered disabled and with the senior population growing exponentially, its important to recognize the value of occupational therapists in improving Nevadans' oral health. If you need help in adapting an oral health aide like a toothbrush visit our website at <http://oralhealthnevada.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/adapting-toothbrush.pdf>

## Oral Health Legislative Day (Cont'd from page 1)

She emphasized the importance of experienced dental leadership at the state level. “Successful State Oral Health Programs have a continuous, strong, credible leader who is a dental professional with public health training,” said Ms. Wood.

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Ms. Christine Garvey, Chair of the AC4OH, a Governor Appointed Advisory Committee, reviewed the funding for a state dental officer and state public health dental hygienist positions that is included in the Governor’s Budget for FY2016/2017. Rounding out the formal program was a visual presentation, *Oral Health in Nevada in 2015*. Oral Health Nevada Inc., a key stakeholder of the Legislative Day, presented Oral Health Hero Awards and hosted a Social Media Storm. During the day’s activities, 27 Assemblymen and 13 Senator offices visited the diverse information booths and made contact with Coalition members in attendance. For additional information on the budget request for oral health leadership go to “Priorities” under the Advocacy tab at [www.oralhealthnevada.com](http://www.oralhealthnevada.com)



ABOVE: Syd McKenzie, Assemblyman Oscarson and Cathie Davenport

RIGHT: with Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson

## HEROES AMONG US

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Oral Health Nevada presented its annual Oral Health Hero Award to two Nevada Assemblymen, Teresa Benitez-Thompson and James Oscarson. Syd McKenzie, founder of Oral Health Nevada stated, “Each of these individuals has demonstrated public health leadership that initiated change and improved oral health for all Nevadans; they are our oral health heroes.”

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson was honored for her sponsorship of AB277 in Nevada’s 77<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session and its subsequent impact for increasing access to dental care for the state’s most vulnerable residents. As a result of the new law, low income children, seniors, the chronically ill and those with disabilities and special needs have access to oral health education and preventive dental care, the cornerstone of dental public health - leading to better general health and well-being.

Assemblyman Oscarson was honored for his dedication to public health and his outstanding support of school-based oral health prevention programs which have helped to address the oral health disparities impacting Nevada’s youngest residents living in low income households and in our most rural communities. According to McKenzie, “As a healthcare professional, the Assemblyman brings a unique perspective to his position as a Legislator.”

