

From Assistant and Hygienist to Dentist—and Now Madame President

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When Dr. Barbara Mousel visits dental schools throughout the country, she can tell the direction the profession is heading.

“I see the changing face of dentistry in the students,” Dr. Mousel said. “The diversity in gender, ethnicity, and culture are all evident. The curriculums today include the importance service in underserved areas, and often in clinic settings. It’s much different from my educational experiences.”

As she prepared to embark on her tenure as ISDS President, the evolution of dentistry served as the inspiration for her theme for the coming year, “Envisioning the Future of Oral Health.”

“Thinking outside the box is a necessity as we look at the future,” she said. “I’m very fond of diversity in thought when problem solving. When working together, we achieve so much more when there are different perspectives involved.”

Dr. Mousel counts coalition building as one of the assets she brings to her position as president. She’s also a bit of a self-described wonk when it comes to governance, citing by-laws, policy and finance among her areas of interests.

“I also bring the heart of an idealist, but the actions of a pragmatist,” she said.

Born, raised and still residing on Chicago’s northwest side, Dr. Mousel received a Bachelor’s in Dental Hygiene from Loyola University. She served as a dental assistant and hygienist for a time before earning her DDS at the Loyola’s former dental school.

She’s been in practice for over 30 years, and during that time has served in numerous leadership roles at the state, regional and local levels. After her term as an ISDS Trustee, the opportunity presented itself to run for Secretary. Now that she has ascended to the top leadership position, Dr. Mousel is ready to carry on the work of those that came before her.

“There are several important issues that have begun under my predecessors that need a plan for completion,” she said. “The passage of the EFDA statute now needs to have the educational components in place.”

ISDS Past President Dr. Terry Barnfield gives Dr. Mousel a lot of credit for shaping dentistry’s position on expanded functions for dental auxiliaries. Her previous experience working as a hygienist and dental assistant provided much-needed perspective to the issue.

“Barb has been the right person in the right place at the right time. She was the expert in the room because of her experience in various levels of dentistry,” Dr. Barnfield said.

Another early priority for Dr. Mousel will be a review of financial policies in response to a generous donation by the Chicago Dental Society. She also wants to work with younger members to understand their perceptions of the society, along with their concerns about dentistry. There is also a Mission of Mercy scheduled for 2018 in Springfield on the docket. And of course, she’ll also be promoting the benefits of being involved in organized dentistry.

“If you want change, you must participate at some level. Being involved also adds to your skill set in other areas. Dentists are very interesting people, particularly our newest members who bring an enormous amount of enthusiasm when they get involved,” she added.

When not practicing or advocating for dentistry, Dr. Mousel enjoys going off the deep end, so to speak.

“Scuba diving has been a passion of mine. I have over 550 open water dives, mostly in the South Pacific,” she said. “My most recent dive was in the Georgia Aquarium with the whale sharks, after the ADA Annual Meeting.”

Her hobby feeds her love of travel, taking her to such places as Australia, Fiji, Palau, Chuuk Lagoon, Tonga, Bali, Sulawesi, and the Maldives. She’s also an avid reader. A fan of the Nancy Drew mysteries as a child, her interests now extend to such varied topics as the Chinese cultural revolution, the Gilded Age, and the American robber barons.

Intellectual and cultural curiosity are important characteristics in a leader. Combined with her expertise in dentistry and devotion to the profession, Dr. Mousel stands ready to lead ISDS to greater heights in the coming year.

“Dr. Mousel will always be prepared and she wants to do what is right for the public and our profession. Under her watch, ISDS will be protected and will move forward with our vision,” Dr. Barnfield said.