

2025 Volume 01

SAN DIEGO COUNTY DENTAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

# Facets

MAGAZINE

A LOOK  
TO THE  
*Year Ahead*

2025

YEAR OF THE SNAKE





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## 2025 MARCH CONTENT



Our 2025 Corporate Roundtable with our incredible sponsors and board of directors!

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY DENTAL SOCIETY

# Facets

MAGAZINE

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# Welcome, New Members!

## Yuridia Avalos, DDS

Mexico-Universidad De  
La Salle, 2013

## Omar Dwider, DMD

MA-Boston University, 2020

## Edward John Givens Jr., DDS

MI-University of Michigan, 2006

## Roslyn Joseph, DMD

The Dental College of Georgia  
at Augusta University, 2024

## Mi La, DDS

CA-UOP SF, 2023

## Wei Liu, DMD

MA-Tufts University, 2014

## Lowella Rodriguez

## Montiague, DDS

Philippines-Centro Escolar  
Univ, 1990

## Mark A. Nocera, DDS

CA-UOP SF, 1990

## Maria Luisa Nunez-Ouji, DDS

Graduation Year: 1986

## Nikhil Sunil Patel, DMD

AZ-Midwestern University, 2024

## Namrata Landge Rana, DDS

Graduation Year: 2017

## Sinan A Shisha, DMD

MA-Boston University, 2013

## Nicholas Sota Sugo, DMD

AZ-Midwestern University, 2024

## Ana Victoria Tueme

## Sifuentes, DDS

Mexico-Universidad De La Salle,  
2024

## Xiang Xu, DDS

NY-New York College of Dentistry,  
2023



EDITORIAL

Written By:  
Eric Shapira, DDS,  
MAGD, MA, MHA



# HERE'S TO A GREAT NEW YEAR AND A NEW EDITOR OF FACETS

*Musings ...*

*Communication is: “a two-way simultaneous transmission of thoughts, information, and feelings, which when successful leads to common meaning and understanding.”*

**F**irstly, I would like to give my Kudos to Dr. Megan Clarke for her outstanding job as our previous FACETS Editor. Her efforts have set the groundwork for me to take over as the new Editor as of January 1, 2025. I hope that the new format this year will be acceptable to our members and that the communication that is presented is both scientific, educational, informative, and enriching, which will enhance your well-being and knowledge, add at least a smile to your face, a warm feeling to your heart and knowledge that will encourage your continuation of learning and education, practice and patient care.

I wish to thank our sponsors for assisting us in our venture to provide extended dental communication to our members and to those who educate us about the new products, services, and techniques ahead of us, that we may not be aware of, as we continue learning about new ideas, products, and things that make us better practitioners and better people in all respects.

I have had much experience in writing over my 50-year career in Dentistry, as well as before this time in high school, college, and dental school. This includes publishing three books, one of which is a dental textbook on Geriatric Dentistry. I am comfortable in becoming the new editor. Still, as always,

I must learn the methods of putting together a specific journal or news magazine in such a way as to achieve a better and greater audience for those who try to both write our articles and those persons who read them. If any of our members are willing to write for Facets, just contact me, and I will put you to work as a contributor at any time. After all, this is your journal... for you, to you, and with you. I (we) cannot do this alone, and I encourage those of you who wish to “communicate” to your fellow members about something you are passionate about. Thank you for your support.... Eric Shapira, DDS, MAGD, MA, MHA (eric@drshapira.com)



*Taiyuan China presentation of Humanitarian Award, “The Friendship Award” 2014*



*Dr. Shapira with his dog, Seven.*



WELCOME TO  
**FACETS,**  
*Dr. Shapira!*





## CONNECT, COMMUNICATE, COLLABORATE, & CARE

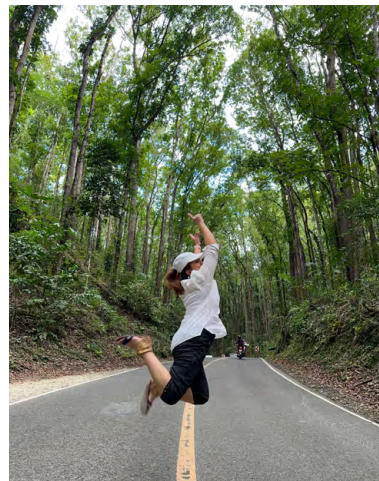
With all that we have to accomplish this year, it's an exciting time to reflect on the progress of our profession and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. The dental community has always been one of collaboration, compassion, and shared knowledge, and these values will be more important than ever in the days to come.

The principles of connecting, communicating, collaborating, and caring will continue to guide us as we face new challenges and embrace new technologies. Connecting, whether through local study groups or international forums, remains essential to staying informed and inspired. Open and effective communication will foster trust, helping us serve our patients and colleagues with clarity and understanding.

Collaboration as a society of professionals is the key to advancing our profession. By working together, sharing expertise, and supporting each other, we can ensure that our practices evolve in ways that benefit our patients and our teams. The spirit of care goes beyond clinical skill; it's about demonstrating empathy and kindness in every interaction, from patient care to professional relationships.

In 2025, let us unite as members of our dental society, reinforcing the bonds that hold us together. Only then can we continue elevating the standard of care, strengthening our profession, and moving forward in solidarity.

*Here's to a year of growth, unity, and lasting impact!*



*Flying High... Onwards to a New Year!*



## SDCDS LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE DENTAL ASSISTING PROGRAM



**AFTER 2 YEARS** of research, outreach, and SDCDS Task Force meetings, the San Diego County Dental Society is proud to introduce an exciting new Dental Assisting Program, set to launch in the summer of 2025. This innovative initiative aims to address the ongoing staff shortages in dental offices while providing high-quality education and training for those seeking a rewarding career in dental assisting.

The 10-week program will be held at the Children's Dental Health Association at 1270 24th Street in San Diego. It is open to current SDCDS member staff and individuals looking to enter the dental field. Participants will gain essential skills and hands-on experience to prepare for a successful career in dental assisting.

One of the standout benefits of this program is its exclusive discounts for SDCDS staff members. This reinforces the Society's commitment to supporting its members and helping them build strong, well-trained teams. By offering accessible, high-quality education, SDCDS is taking proactive steps to alleviate staffing shortages in dental offices across San Diego County.

In addition to comprehensive dental assisting training, the SDCDS Academy of Learning will offer essential Dental Board of California certifications, including:

**Infection Control**

**Basic Life Support (BLS)**

**Coronal Polish**

**Radiation Safety**

**Pit and Fissure Sealants**

This one-of-a-kind program sets SDCDS apart as the only dental society in California to provide a standalone learning academy exclusively for its members. By investing in education and workforce development, SDCDS is enhancing the quality of dental care in the region while creating valuable career opportunities for aspiring dental assistants.

With an anticipated start date in the summer of 2025, enrollment details and further information will be available soon. This is an incredible opportunity for SDCDS members and prospective dental assistants to gain top-tier training in a growing and essential field.

The San Diego County Dental Society wishes to thank the work of the Dental Assisting Task Force for its work on this project!

**Dr. Lilia Larin**

**Dr. Ghazal Navab**

**Dr. Brad Sainsbury**

**Dr. Faithe Barreyro**

**Dr. Brian Fabb**

**Dr. David Milder**

**Dr. Mona Jabari**

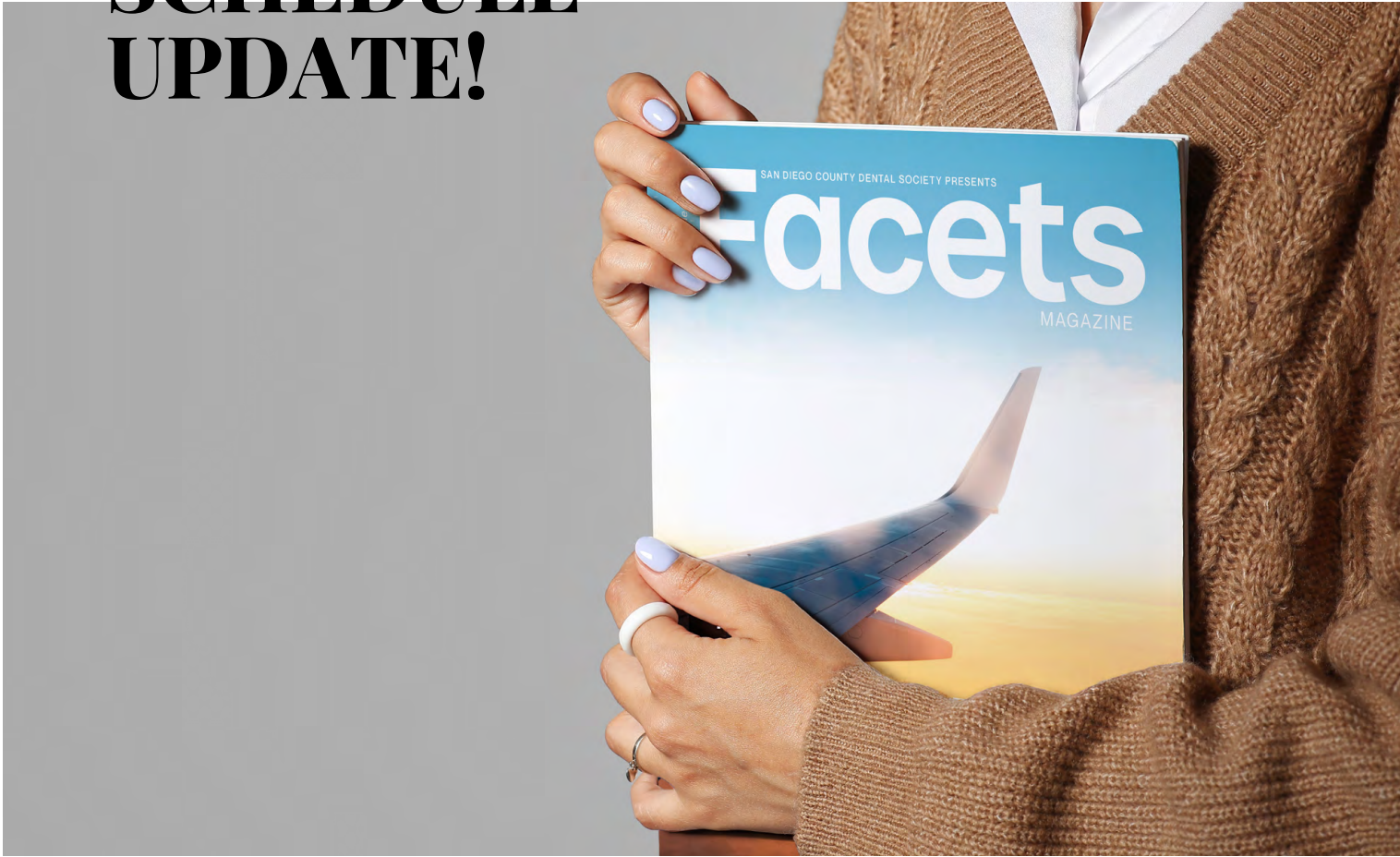
And Special Consulting from Dr. Megan Clarke

For updates and inquiries starting in April 2025, visit [www.sdcds.org](http://www.sdcds.org) or contact SDCDS directly at [Director@SDCDS.org](mailto:Director@SDCDS.org). Don't miss this chance to be part of an innovative, career-advancing program shaping the future of dental assisting in San Diego!





ISSUE RELEASE  
**SCHEDULE  
UPDATE!**



Facets will be shifting to a quarterly release schedule in 2025. You can view the magazine online early on our website or wait for it to arrive in your mailbox. Stay tuned for exciting updates!

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Written By: Megan Clarke, D.D.S., C.E.C.

# SDCDS RELAUNCHES THE Mentorship + Leadership PROGRAM

**AFTER A SEVERAL-YEAR HIATUS**, we are excited to announce that SDCDS has relaunched our much-loved mentorship program! On February 5th, 20 mentors and mentees met at Ignite to kick off the mentorship program with a mentor-mentee mixer. Our mentors and mentees participated in professional speed-dating as a way for all mentors and mentees to meet each other before being paired.

With the program's relaunch, we made some changes to enhance the success and continuity of the mentorship program. Participants will answer an in-depth questionnaire before being matched with their mentor/mentee, which will help participants center their priorities and expectations before starting the program. They will also complete a personality assessment before participation to enhance mentors' and mentees' compatibility. All participants will be given a leadership style questionnaire to help develop their leadership skills, which will help both mentors and mentees.

Our participants' breadth of practice experiences runs the gamut of dental careers. Some of our mentors include "seasoned" dentists who have just retired or are nearing retirement, while others are at the peak of their clinical careers. Some work for the military, while others are/were private practice owners their whole careers. Our mentees include some who have just graduated from dental school or residency in the last year, while others have been practicing for several years. And, like the mentors, we had some mentees who are currently working in the military.

Mentors and mentees will meet quarterly, during which they will be given assignments to complete together to enhance their practice skills and leadership abilities. A mid-year mixer will take place as well.

If you want to participate in next year's cohort, please contact Katherine Hobday at [communications@sdcds.org](mailto:communications@sdcds.org).





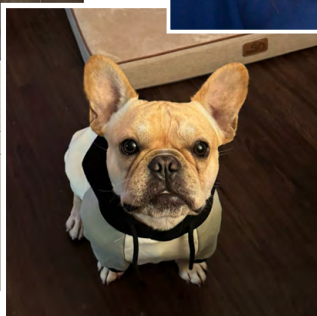
# Let Me Introduce...

*Please meet Dr. Rosa Le*

*Let Me Introduce is an ongoing column featured in Facets to introduce us to the many members that make up the depth and breadth of the San Diego County Dental Society. We hope you enjoy getting to know your colleagues better.*

Written by: **Malieka Johnson, DDS**

I was first introduced to Dr. Le (pronounced “Lay”) during an editorial board meeting for Facets. I had the absolute pleasure of interviewing her and found that we share some striking similarities in our upbringing as well as how we got hooked on dentistry. I learned that while she is passionate about service and impacting the oral health of her patients, Dr. Le has a heart for the people and is deeply motivated to educate them on the importance of their overall systemic health. This was one of the most down-to-earth interviews I have conducted and we laughed a lot. I hope you enjoy learning about her as much as I have.



**So, tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from originally? Where did you grow up?**

“I am originally from San Jose, CA and grew up in the suburb Milpitas.”

**Are you from a big, medium-sized, or small family?**

“My immediate family is just my mom and myself, but she has a ton of siblings and they have a ton of kids, as well. I have 25 first cousins, all on my mom’s side, and some of them have children, and some of those children have children too! There was a 20-year age difference from my mom and her oldest sister, so the generations are spread out.

I recently did our family tree and it spans 3’ by 1’ in tiny handwriting! I was the baby cousin! A lot of people can’t tell I am an only child, because I grew up with my cousins as my siblings!”

**What was one of your favorite childhood memories or activities?**

“I had a lot of fun with my extended family. We would actually play outside! I remember playing outside until the sun went down. We’d make up random games, ride bikes, have picnics, play tag. We had so much fun we lost track of time, and an adult would have to yell at us to come in and eat. Do kids do that anymore? Haha! During winter breaks, two of my cousins and I would stay up ALL NIGHT, and play Monopoly, Mario Party and Mario Kart.”

**Where did you complete your undergraduate studies? What did you major in?**

“I went to UCSD (Go Tritons!) and was a double major in Biochemistry and Psychology. I graduated in 2012. I was a clinic manager in the Pre-Dental Society and a volunteer with Habitat For Humanity.”

**What was your “aha” moment in becoming a dentist? How did you choose this fine profession?**

“I was unsure but knew I wanted to be some sort of doctor. I volunteered a lot during high school. I also started shadowing people. I shadowed a pharmacist and that was no fun.... sorry pharmacist friends! I heard UCSD had an intense pre-dental society, and that turned out to be true. There was a moment when we were volunteering at the UCSD Free Dental Clinic and a woman came in to get

crowns delivered. It was my first day and they didn’t tell me she was getting #8 and #9 delivered. I was outside doing her intake and she was covering her mouth when she spoke. Then she went into the clinic and received her treatment. The next thing I heard was her choked up cry, the kind where you squeak, and she was just sobbing. I ran over because I thought we were having an emergency situation, but as it turned out, she was elated and happy that she could smile again! I started to cry and tried to push my tears back, since I was still on the clock! It was serendipitous on my first day. I think Dr. Irv Silverstein set this up! After my observations, I knew I wanted to be a part of making people feel like this.”

**Where did you attend dental school? What year did you graduate?**

“The University of Maryland, Baltimore. I graduated in 2017. I applied all over the country. I ended up going to an interview in Baltimore, and at the end of the interview one of the professors called me by name in front of all the other interviewees, to come to her office. She told me that Dr. Silverstein had spoken to her, as well as another professor, and they really wanted me there. I felt like I belonged there! I loved my time there. Afterward, I did a GPR at Denver Health Medical Center and finished in 2018.”

**What do you love most about dentistry?**



“I think I have to circle back to that feeling of making someone feel special. I am making a person feel special, one at a time. Specifically, it was being able to spend time educating Black men about their health. Many of them would have other comorbidities, like high blood pressure or diabetes, but had not had any medical professional explain the conditions, and I would have to explain to them why I couldn’t give them anesthetic with epinephrine. I would talk to them about their health and ask questions about why they weren’t taking their medication. Their responses were almost always, “because I feel fine!” I would sit with them and give them a biology lesson to help them understand why their medication was so important. There are a lot of doctors that come from different or higher socio-economic backgrounds than their patients, and I think they don’t understand the gap of health literacy and the need to actually spend time with their patients. I had a lot of conversations to educate patients. It hits home for me, especially since I had to be my mom’s translator at the age of 7.”

**Where do you practice?**

“I have been working at a community health center.”

**Are you married? Have kids?**

“Yes, I am married to David, who some of you have met at our events! We have our first baby, a French Bulldog named ‘Winston’, who a lot of you love already! We have a new baby, Luan. He’s the best thing to happen to both of us (Winston’s still deciding if the crying is worth all the lack of sleep). We are exhausted; an exhausted no dental school all-nighter could compare to, but we’re so happy with him! We learn from him and grow with him daily.”

**What do you enjoy doing outside of dentistry? – Family, Hobbies, Talents, volunteers, etc.**

“I love to eat! That is one of my favorite things to do, especially with family and friends! One of my favorite cuisines is Vietnamese food, but I am biased. Vietnamese dishes often have all four elements of good food: salt, fat, acid, and heat (also a documentary on Netflix). Other than eating, when I had the time and energy before the baby. I love to read, write letters to



friends, journal, go on beach walks, explore farmers' markets all over San Diego, cooking and baking for friends, watching food shows/documentaries/competitions, and going to the gym.

**What is one thing on your life bucket list that you have fulfilled and one thing yet to be fulfilled?**

Al: "I went to Alinea, a 3 Michelin Star restaurant in Chicago. It was featured in a documentary, Spinning Plates, I was watching while studying. The head chef, Grant Achatz, had squamous cell carcinoma, mentioned right as I was reading about it in our PowerPoint, and he had a tongue and jaw resection with chemotherapy, so he couldn't taste his food, but somehow managed to get and maintain those 3 Michelin stars.

Bucket list to-do: more traveling! Particularly where Luan can learn about his roots: Vietnam, China, Germany, Poland, Cameroon, Congo, and Nigeria!"

**Do you volunteer in dentistry? Are you involved in the dental society or other form of organized dentistry or dental missions?**

"Yes, I volunteer with SDCDS Editorial Board. I am a part of a team that helps with SD AGD's social media. I did volunteer with Team Smiles and random health fairs in Denver!"

**Do you have a favorite or life quote?**

"Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts." —Winston Churchill"

**If a fellow dentist wants to reach out to you, can they email you?**

"Absolutely! They can email me at [rosaleds@gmail.com](mailto:rosaleds@gmail.com)."



# —We are indeed better together!

The more we learn about one another and the more we come together around our commonalities and our diversities, the more we grow and thrive as a community. That's how we build our collegial network and develop friendships. I hope you are enjoying this column. It's been my absolute pleasure to have served the dental society on the Editorial board for 10 years and to start this column nearly

four years ago. As with any creation there comes a time to pass the baton and release it into new hands.... I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Rosa Le will officially take over this column going forward. If you would like to be featured in a future publication, please reach out to Dr. Le at [rosaleds@gmail.com](mailto:rosaleds@gmail.com).

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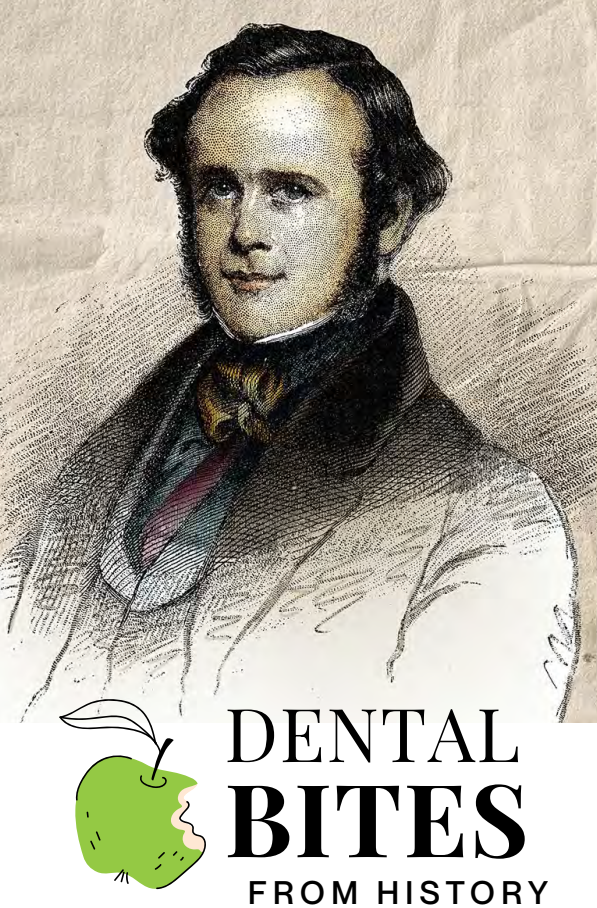
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For questions, send an email to [info@sdcdf.org](mailto:info@sdcdf.org) or call 619-500-1619.





Horace Wells (January 21, 1815 – January 24, 1848) was an American dentist known for pioneering the use of nitrous oxide as an anesthetic. Despite his contributions, initial credit for the discovery went to fellow dentist William T.G. Morton, which deeply affected Wells.

Later in life, Wells faced personal struggles that led to his imprisonment in New York. During this time, he tragically passed away. Years after his passing, the American Dental Association (1864) and the American Medical Association (1870) officially acknowledged Wells as the true pioneer of anesthesia. Though he did not live to see this recognition, his impact on modern medicine remains significant.

Written by: Eric Shapira, DDS, MAGD, MA, MHA

# SDCDS 2025 UPCOMING EVENTS



This year's Women's Retreat is on **April 26th!**

This year's Professional Speed Dating event will be held on **May 9th!**



We have BLS courses in 2025 on **June 17th & August 17th!**

Our next DPA and Infection Control Course is on **August 16th!**



This year's Oktoberfest is on **October 9th!**

This year's End of the Year party is on **December 6th!**



## Dr. Richard S. Mowry Gives Back to the Community

Dr. Jason B. Gile and Dr. Richard S. Mowry, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons practicing in Chula Vista, reaches out to the community each year by awarding four \$500.00 scholarships. This is awarded based on academic merit and perceived future potential. Applicants write an essay and provide academic performance information. This year, the scholarships were awarded to

(from left to right) Dr. Jason B. Gile, Ryan Dinh from Eastlake High School, Isabella Amelie Dang from Otay Ranch High School, Dr. Richard S. Mowry, and Alexander Rivera from Olympian High School. They are all to be congratulated on pursuing their College careers.

Dr. Gile and Dr. Mowry said, "Each student was praised for their hard work, leadership skills and selfless interest in helping others in the community."





# Celebrating New Beginnings

HONORING FAMILIES  
AND BUILDING THE  
FUTURE OF DENTISTRY  
IN SAN DIEGO

Written by: Crystal Washington

At the San Diego County Dental Society, we celebrate the bonds that strengthen our community, both professionally and personally. The arrival of a new baby is a moment of joy and a powerful reminder of the future we're building together. Our committee and board members bring their dedication and passion for dentistry to everything they do, maintaining a meaningful balance between their professional commitments and family life.

We're proud to acknowledge and honor the members of our SDCDS Board and Committees who have recently welcomed new life into their families.

Dr. Rosa Le and David Rickerson welcomed baby Luan in August.



Dr. Tiffany Chan and Alex Le welcomed baby Evan in October.



EVAN



ELIZABETH

Dr. Sarah Silverstein Kontokanis and Andreas Kontokanis welcomed baby Elizabeth Ilana Kontokanis in October.



KIMIKO



Dr. Dana Baba and Phillip Garcia welcomed Kimiko Baba-Garcia in November.



AARA

Dr. Shivali Gohel and Ankur welcomed baby Aara in November.

As we celebrate these new beginnings, we recognize that these families represent more than just personal milestones. They represent future dentists, advocates, and leaders who will continue to elevate our profession, uphold our commitment to patient care, and contribute to the ongoing success of SDCDS.



LUAN



# WOMEN'S AFTERNOON RETREAT

INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN DRIVING CONVERSATIONS  
ON WELLNESS AND LEADERSHIP

*The Prado*  
AT BALBOA PARK

SAVE  
THE  
DATE | APRIL  
26TH  
12:30PM - 3:30PM

TOPIC

*Secret Saboteurs*

WHY WE GET IN THE WAY  
OF OUR GOALS—AND HOW  
TO PERMANENTLY CHANGE

SPEAKER

*Katy Rose*

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