

# TRODENT

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HERMAN OSTROW SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY OF USC | FALL 2017



**REMAKING  
SMILES**

**ON SKID ROW**



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# DEAN'S MESSAGE



## Dear Trojan Dental Family,

Welcome to the Fall 2017 issue of *TroDent*, in which we highlight the incredibly special work that our faculty and students do everyday on Skid Row.

As many of you know, Skid Row is an area of Downtown L.A. that spans 50 city blocks and is where an estimated 2,000 homeless men, women and children sleep every night. There are approximately 58,000 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County altogether. Driving down San Pedro Street, you can see tent after tent pitched along the sidewalks, providing the only shelter many of these folks know. It's heartbreaking to see so many down on their luck.

The university is doing what it can to solve this vexing problem. USC Provost Michael Quick has included homelessness on his list of "Wicked Problems" that he has challenged the USC academic community to tackle.

Ostrow is (and has been) doing its part to address some of the oral health care issues this underserved population experiences. With dental clinics at both the Union Rescue Mission and the John Wesley Community Health Center, Ostrow is on the front lines, providing free cleanings, extractions, dentures and restorations to a population that might never have had access to a dentist's chair. I can't overstate how important good oral health — and the self-esteem that comes with it — is to these individuals as they work tirelessly to get back on their feet.

This issue's cover story, "[Something to Smile About](#)," showcases the ways in which our faculty and students are making a real difference in the lives of so many homeless and low-income individuals on Skid Row. Even after so many years in dentistry, to this day, I'm still touched when I read about patients crying tears of joy after getting their dentures and seeing the radiant smiles they thought had been lost forever. It's such noble work, and I can't tell you how proud I am of the individuals — like Drs. Kathy and Mehdi, directors of the URM and JWCH dental clinics respectively — who are there, day in and day out, providing dental treatment to underserved populations.

There's a reason that our students always cite community dentistry as one of the most memorable experiences of their time in dental school. It's the immense satisfaction they feel after helping so many in need — something we hope they take with them into their careers.

In this issue, you will also find news about an [exciting new grant](#) that will help our Community Oral Health Programs provide dental care to underserved children and teens; a story about the addition of [3-D printed dentures](#) to Ostrow's curriculum and a feature about the [dental emergencies](#) our faculty and students face everyday in Ostrow's Urgent Care and Dental Trauma Center.

Enjoy the issue and have a safe, blessed holiday season.

Fight On!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Avishai Sadan".

Avishai Sadan DMD, MBA

Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery Professor of Dentistry

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

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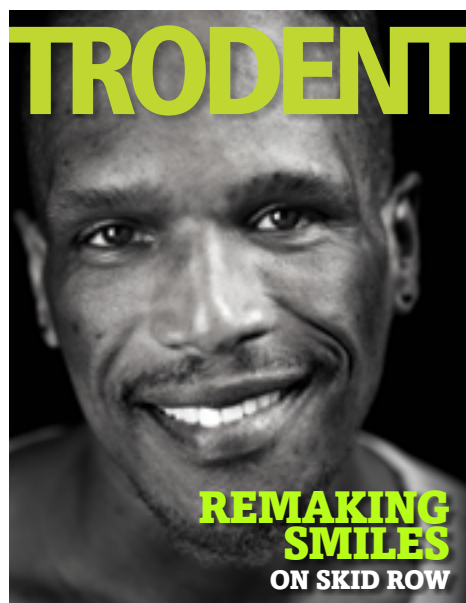
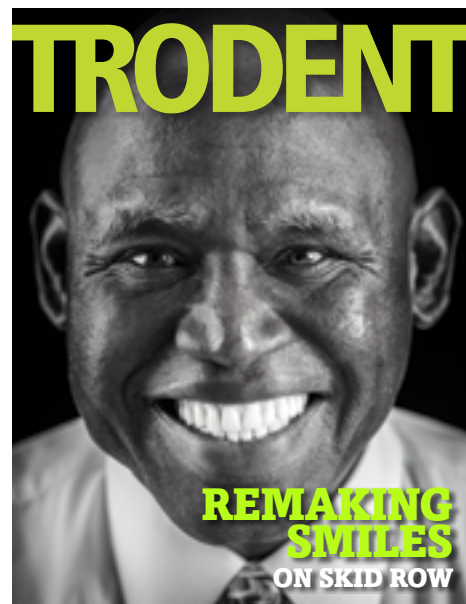
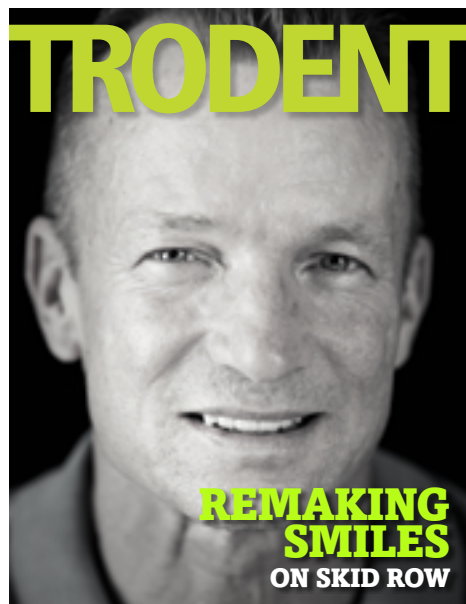


# Creature Comfort

Meet Quatsch, one of two therapy dogs that recently visited Ostrow as part of an exciting new partnership between the dental school and [\*\*Therapy Dogs International\*\*](#). Once a month, Ostrow will welcome the dogs to its first- and second-floor waiting rooms, where the four-legged volunteers will comfort and distract patients who might otherwise be consumed with dental anxiety. In this photo, Quatsch provides a welcome distraction to Ostrow patient Edelmira Cleary, 66.

PHOTO BY [\*\*CHRISTINA GANDOLFO\*\*](#)





## COVER STORY

## SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT | 18-27

With 15 dental chairs on Skid Row, Ostrow is uniquely positioned to provide treatment to a low-income and homeless population who often have neglected their oral health in the face of larger problems. Meet some of the individuals who have had their smiles (and lives) made over at the hands of Ostrow students.

## FEATURES

### PHOTOGRAPHING BHUTAN | 28-30

Rather than settling into retirement, Ostrow (and USC Dornsife) alumnus Barry Shaffer '70, DDS '74 is following his long dental career with a new life as a successful photographer.

### OSTROW'S GOT TALENT | 31-36

As one of the nation's top dental schools, Ostrow attracts many bright, talented students to its various programs. But many USC dentistry students have talents that extend far beyond the dental cubicle.

### DELIVERING SMILES UNDER PRESSURE | 37-39

They come from far and wide, often looking for comfort from such dental emergencies as oral pain, cavities and cracked (or missing) teeth. Ostrow faculty and students are there to provide treatment and set them on the right path to regular dental care.

## DEPARTMENTS

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PRINTED BY

GREENS PRINTING  
[GREENSPRINTING.COM](http://GREENSPRINTING.COM)

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### SUSAN BELL FEATURE WRITER

In "**Photographing Bhutan**," Susan Bell writes about Ostrow alumnus Barry Shaffer, who is enjoying a second career as a travel photographer after hanging up his dental loupes for retirement.

**Work has appeared in:** *Wallpaper, L.A. Times, The Times of London, Marie Claire, Trojan Family Magazine* and more

**Last book read:** *The Unconsoled* by Kazuo Ishiguro, whom I'm delighted to see just won the Nobel.

**Most interesting vacation:** Cuba

**What gives your life meaning?** The people I love, music, architecture and design, storytelling, photography, writing, art, nature, travel, cities, laughter, coincidence and kindness.

**About writing "Photographing Bhutan":** What inspired me most about writing Barry's story was trying to capture the extraordinary contrast between his pre-retirement life as a successful dentist in the Valley and an unlikely second career as a photographer in the remote and tiny kingdom of Bhutan.



### REX LIU '86, DDS '90 GUEST COLUMNIST

In this issue's "**Odd Jobs**" column, Ostrow alumnus Rex Liu recounts the most peculiar way he made money during dental school, delivering singing telegrams.

**Day job:** Family and cosmetic dentist/Business owner

**Worst job:** Golf ball collector

**Memorable singing telegram:** Jumping out of a cake for a lady's birthday and calling her the wrong name

**Best dental school memory:** I remember hearing the student body president talk to the incoming class, and I thought it was so cool. Four years later, it was me giving the same talk.

**On writing the "Odd Jobs" column:** While it seemed so strange to do singing telegrams, it's really no stranger than performing in local shows, hosting a telethon, singing at fundraisers and parties, doing commercials or performing as Elvis on a cruise ship. Does your dentist do that?



### CAMILLE NISHIKAWA DDS '10 "INSPIRED" WRITER

In this issue's "**Inspired**" column, Camille Nishikawa shares the touching story of a patient encounter that cemented her path to practicing pediatrics and community dentistry.

**Day job:** Director of Queenscare + USC Mobile Dental Clinics

**Most satisfying part of job:** Introducing dental students to the possibilities of pediatric dentistry in a community health setting.

**Hobbies:** Traveling, attending sporting events and going to the beach with my husband and rescue dog Harvey

**Favorite dental school memory:** Meeting my husband on the first day of orientation

**About writing "Inspired":** It was a surprisingly eye-opening experience. I am grateful for the opportunity to share what has inspired me so far, but I am also excited about what the future may hold for community dentistry and pediatrics.



## USC dentistry, Cal State L.A. awarded \$16.6 million to provide dental treatment to underserved children and teens

Jasmine Aguilar, 3, receives a dental checkup during one of Ostrow's mobile clinic outreach events funded by the CHAMP grant.

PHOTO BY GUS RUELAS

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Ostrow has partnered with California State University-Los Angeles for a \$16.6-million state grant to provide dental health care and education to underserved children and teens throughout Los Angeles.

The grant — called the Local Dental Pilot Project — comes out of the **Medi-Cal 2020 Dental Transformation Initiative**, a statewide effort to improve dental health for the more than 5 million children enrolled in the Denti-Cal program.

"Providing treatment to underserved populations has long been one of Ostrow's top priorities," said Dr. Roseann Mulligan MS '87, Ostrow's associate dean of community health programs and hospital affairs. "This collaboration, which pairs our dental expertise with the knowledge from several disciplines at Cal State L.A., has the

potential to make quite an impact on communities that are often overlooked."

### ALL HANDS ON DECK

The multi-disciplinary endeavor brings together students from Ostrow and the **USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work** with students from Cal State L.A.'s **Rongxiang Xu College of Health and Human Services** to create mobile teams that will provide underserved communities with dental health care support.

Ostrow students and faculty members will provide dental screenings and dental education. (Cal State L.A. does not have a dental education program.)

USC's social work students and students from Cal State L.A.'s programs in child and family studies, communications disorders, public health, nursing and nutrition will help families to identify and overcome dental health

barriers. They will also connect underserved youth, aged up to 20 years old, with a regular dentist.

Throughout the course of the four-year grant, the team expects to work with more than 30,000 youth in the San Gabriel Valley and the areas surrounding USC and Cal State L.A., with a special focus on children with special needs as well as American Indian Alaska Native populations.

Los Angeles is home to the second-largest urban population of American Indian Alaskan Natives in the United States, according to the 2010 U.S. National Census. The American Indian Alaskan Native population suffers from the poorest oral health of any population in the United States, with staggering rates of untreated tooth decay among children, according to the Pew Charitable Trust.

### A POWERFUL ALLIANCE

The grant money — \$7.1 million

of which is specifically earmarked for USC dentistry — comes at a unique time for Ostrow as its \$19.4 million **Children's Health and Maintenance Program** (CHAMP) grants begin to wind down.

The CHAMP grants were first awarded to Ostrow in 2011 by First 5 LA, which allocated funds collected by California's 50-cent tobacco tax to health care, education and child development programs.

Ostrow and the USC's social work school have been working together ever since to provide access to dental health care for children, aged up to 5 years old.

"We have made so many incredible partnerships and done such amazing work to improve dental health care for children across L.A.," Mulligan said of the CHAMP program. "And we're so very fortunate to have forged this alliance with Cal State L.A. to be able to continue doing this work and improving the lives of so many people along the way."





# What Will Your Trojan Legacy Be?

Amy King Dundon-Berchtold '72 made a gift through her estate, and from donations of real estate holdings, toward the endowment of the University Club of USC—which was renamed in her honor. Amy's gift was especially meaningful because the historic Trojan meeting place is located in the building named for her late mother, Joyce King Stoops EdD '66, and late stepfather, Emery Stoops PhD '41.

To create your Trojan legacy, contact the USC Office of Gift Planning at (213) 740-2682 or [giftplanning@usc.edu](mailto:giftplanning@usc.edu) and visit us online at [www.usc.edu/giftplanning](http://www.usc.edu/giftplanning).

**"I'm proud to follow in my mother's tradition of giving back to USC."**

**AMY KING DUNDON-BERCHTOLD, WITH HER HUSBAND, JIM BERCHTOLD**

THE CAMPAIGN *for the*  
University of Southern California  
FAS REGNA TROJAE



# NEWS BRIEFS

## ■ OSTROW, KECK LAUNCH NATION'S FIRST DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM IN PAIN MEDICINE

Ostrow has partnered with the Keck School of Medicine of USC to launch the nation's first [online master's degree program in pain medicine](#). The 37-month program will cover a wide range of issues, including pain assessment and classification, psychological aspects of chronic pain, pharmacotherapeutics for pain, and public policy and legal issues. The need for advanced education on pain has become increasingly apparent as the number of opioid related deaths has spiked in recent years. "Just about any clinician who deals with patients with chronic pain can benefit from this type of training," said Ostrow's Assistant Dean of Distance Education Glenn Clark. In addition to a master's program in pain medicine, Ostrow offers a one-year certificate program. In total, Ostrow now has three online master's degrees and four online certificate programs.

## ■ KAISER FOUNDATION AWARDS \$75,000 TO COMMUNITY ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

This summer, the Kaiser Foundation Hospitals awarded Ostrow's Community Oral Health Programs \$75,000 for the Community Oral Health Training and Professional Pipeline Connector — a program that prepares oral health professionals to serve vulnerable populations after graduation. "Appropriately trained professionals can make a significant difference in society," Ostrow Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Mariela Padilla said. "Developing a project that addresses training needs of oral health providers, finding the right places for those professionals to develop a career and facilitating their insertion in the community, is a challenge we are committed to pursue."

## ■ SEDGHIZADEH RECEIVES \$1.5 MILLION FOR BONE INFECTION TREATMENT

Associate Professor Parish Sedghizadeh DDS '01 and his team were recently awarded \$1.5 million from the National Institutes of Health to continue their research on a drug compound that could change the way bone infection is treated. The main obstacle to treating bone infection currently is that antibiotics are not absorbed by bone at a high enough concentration to kill bacteria effectively. Sedghizadeh's novel treatment method would pair an antibiotic like ciprofloxacin with a bisphosphonate (osteoporosis-treating medication) to ensure the antibiotic is directly delivered and released at the site of the bone infection. "Just a single dose in vivo using this 'targeting and release strategy' killed 99 percent of bone-infecting bacteria and was an order of magnitude more deadly to the bacteria than ciprofloxacin alone," Sedghizadeh said.

## ■ FORREST, ACCOMPLISHED FACULTY AWARD WINNER

Ostrow Professor of Clinical Dentistry Jane Forrest has been selected for this year's "Accomplished Faculty Award" by the [American Dental Association](#) and the [American Association for Dental Research](#). The award is meant to acknowledge dental school faculty who have made significant contributions to implementing and advancing evidence-based dentistry. It is the second award for Forrest this fall. She also received the Carol King Award for Advancing the Profession of Dental Hygiene from the [New Jersey Dental Hygiene Association](#). That award is meant to recognize dental hygienists who have advanced the profession of dental hygiene. Forrest has been a full-time faculty member at Ostrow since 1999. She is director of the [National Center for Dental Hygiene Research & Practice](#).

## ■ DISCOVERY COULD LEAD TO FEWER SURGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH CLEFT PALATES

New research from Associate Dean of Research [Yang Chai PhD '91, DDS '96](#) could lead to fewer surgical interventions for patients with cleft palate. In a [new study](#) published in the journal *Development*, Chai and his colleagues used engineered mice to zero-in on how the oropharyngeal region is patterned and how a special group of stem cells called cranial neural crest cells set up scaffolds for muscle cells during craniofacial development. This discovery may not only mean fewer surgeries for those living with cleft palate, but it could also mean the surgeries that still do occur will be done that much more effectively. "The hope is that we can regenerate muscle and that can be used to help improve the surgical correction of a cleft in the soft palate," said Chai, who is also director of USC's [Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology](#). *Development* is a leading research journal in the area of developmental biology. It has an impact factor of 5.843.

## ■ OSTROW WELCOMES DDS CLASS OF 2021, DH CLASS OF 2019

Earlier this fall, more than 200 doctor of dental surgery, dental hygiene and international dentistry students put on their white coats for the first time and officially joined the Trojan Dental Family at Ostrow's [2017 White Coat Ceremony](#). The incoming doctor of dental surgery class is composed of 145 students, chosen from a pool of nearly 2,900 applicants from 48 states. They are almost evenly split between men and women and represent 44 undergraduate majors. The Advanced Standing Program for International Dentists welcomed 34 students, hailing from 13 countries, including China, India and Syria. The incoming dental hygiene class contained 39 students, 21 of which already had bachelor's degrees. The White Coat Ceremony took place on Friday, Aug. 25 at the Bovard Auditorium.



# 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

## Jianfu Chen

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Meet Jianfu “Jeff” Chen, a new assistant professor and biomedical engineering researcher, who, earlier this year, joined Ostrow’s **Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology** (CCMB) to conduct research in pediatric brain disorders and neurodegeneration. Here are five things to know about the newest addition to Ostrow’s research faculty:

**1 CHEN’S RESEARCH CAREER BEGAN HALF A WORLD AWAY IN A RATHER UNEXPECTED FIELD.** Chen completed his bachelor’s degree in microbiology at China Agricultural University before moving stateside to earn a master’s degree in plant pathology. “I was fascinated by how the micro-organisms interacted with the plant,” he says.

**2 WHEN HIS PLANT PATHOLOGY MENTOR RETURNED TO CHINA, CHEN PURSUED OTHER RESEARCH INTERESTS.** Chen went to work for a lab focused on cardiovascular development, where he became fascinated with developmental biology — he earned a doctorate in cell and developmental biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2008 — leading him to study neurodevelopmental disorders and, later, craniofacial birth defects.

**3 HE WAS DRAWN TO OSTROW’S CCMB BECAUSE OF ITS STRONG RESEARCH REPUTATION.** “If you talk with anybody in the country, they always say that USC has such a strong craniofacial group,” says Chen, who moved his family from the Peach State, where he worked as an assistant professor at the University of Georgia, to the Golden State to further define his role in the sciences.

**4 CHANCES ARE GOOD, HIS PHONE WON’T GO OFF IN A MEETING.** You won’t find the latest, sleekest model of smart-phone on Chen, who opts to carry around a cheap, old cell phone — that is when he carries one at all. “Oftentimes, I forget my phone at home,” he says. “I just don’t have a lot of time to chat or spend time with my phone.”

**5 WHEN HE’S NOT WORKING IN HIS LAB, HE’S ENJOYING TIME WITH HIS FAMILY.** Chen and his wife, Xinshuo, have two daughters — Grace, 7, and Caroline, 3, who keep the young parents busy off the clock. Lucky for Chen and his wife, who works as a data analyst, both his and her parents have visited from China to squeeze in some quality “grandparent time” with the kids, giving the Chens a much-needed chance to catch their breath.





# Yes, you're already a member.

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# FRONT DESK

SECRET LIVES, ODD JOBS, Q&As AND MORE!

Meet Timber, a 15-year-old quarter horse, who like Ong's four other "partners" must pass an annual proficiency exam to remain on the force.

## SECRET LIVES Howard Ong

Mounted Patrolman

*In his spare time, the Ostrow alumnus patrols Los Angeles County on horseback as a civilian volunteer with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.*

continued on [page 12](#) »





PHOTO BY DEREK TAM

« continued from page 11

**G**iving back to the community has long been a way of life for Howard Ong DDS '89.

As a child, he saw firsthand the power of volunteerism, accompanying his parents on church-sponsored missions to feed the homeless at soup kitchens.

In the years since, he has spent a lot of time giving back. As a student, he relished his time providing treatment to underserved children with USC's **mobile dental clinics**. As a working professional, he volunteered with Rotary International for more than two decades and began a nonprofit organization called Make a Smile Foundation, which sponsors programs to benefit underprivileged kids.

"My parents always said if you have the opportunity to give just a little bit — whether that be money, time or talent — then you need to give," Ong says.

In early 2013, Ong found another way to give back to his community — a volunteer opportunity that united his respect for law enforcement ("there's such nobility to that profession," he says) with his love for horses.

In his "secret life," you will find Ong patrolling L.A. County on horseback as a certified civilian volunteer for the **Los Angeles Sheriff's**

#### **Department's Mounted Enforcement Detail.**

### **SADDLING UP**

Ong's love for horses began as a way for the father to bond with his daughters, who fell in love with horseback riding during a summer vacation.

"Horses became their thing. I started taking lessons with them, and it morphed from there," he says. "We went from doing that together to buying our first horse to buying our second horse."

Today, the Ongs own four horses — Timber, Whiskey, Charlie and Joey — all of which have been trained and tested by the Sheriff's Department to serve as "partners" for Ong during his patrols.

"It requires a lot of hours of training — both with the Sheriff's Department as well as at home — to make sure they can perform like you want them to," says Ong, who, much like his well-studied steed, must also pass an annual proficiency test to remain a uniformed civilian volunteer.

### **FINDING PURPOSE**

The job requires that Ong commit himself

to 20 hours of patrolling per month — in addition to the 32 hours a week he puts in at his Seal Beach, Calif., dental practice.

Typical duties include crime suppression, crowd management and wildfire equine and livestock evacuation, according to the L.A. County Sheriff's Department website.

"We can't ride alone; we have to go with a sworn officer — the person who carries the gun," Ong says, with a laugh. "We are basically the eyes and ears for the officers."

The mounted posse is responsible for patrolling areas within L.A. County's **Department of Parks and Recreation** as well as hiking trails, rivers and anywhere else a motorcycle or patrol car cannot go. They also regularly attend parades and street festivals to ensure crowd safety.

The volunteer gig takes a lot of his time — the monthly time commitment plus the hours preparing man and horse for proficiency exams — but Ong doesn't seem to mind. It gives both he and his four-legged partner something much greater in return: purpose.

"Everyone needs purpose," he says. "Whether you're an animal or a human being, you need some type of purpose in your life, and this experience gives both me and my horses just that."

—John Hobbs MA '14





READ

## Power of the Pen

Ostrow students Armin Afshar DDS '18 and Mona Dousti DDS '18 are hoping to take the bogeyman out of the dental office with their new children's book, *Shiny Happy Teeth*. Filled with characters like Ms. Mirror, Mr. Thirsty and Mr. Whistle, the book — illustrated by Afshar, a former architecture drafter and graphic designer — aims to familiarize children with dental tools and procedures so that they will not fear going to the dentist. "I hope that children look at their dental appointments as fun experiences, understand the importance of home care and dental visits and are able to build positive, long-term relationships with their dentists," Dousti says. *Shiny Happy Teeth* is available for purchase on [Amazon](#).



WATCH

## Video Star

Earlier this year, Orthodontics resident Alexandra Chamberlain '11, DDS '16 took home a first prize in the 2017 Video Contest at the American Association of Orthodontists Annual Session for "Dr. Chamberlain Presents Retainer Do's and Don'ts." In the award-winning video, Chamberlain shares 10 best practices for the retainer-wearing set to ensure their mouthpieces stay safe and their smiles straight. [Check it out here.](#)



## Race for the Crown

Orofacial Pain resident Laurel Henderson DDS '17 was recently crowned and sashed "Miss SoCal USA," qualifying her to compete in the "Miss California USA" pageant in December. To keep Henderson's pageant game on point, we ran a few typical beauty pageant questions by her for a special *TroDent* lightning round:

### MISS SOCAL USA, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN LIFE SO FAR?

Getting into the orofacial pain and oral medicine residency program.

### WHAT'S YOUR LIFE PHILOSOPHY?

"Those who spread sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

—J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* author

### WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 10 YEARS?

"Doctor Laurel," oral health correspondent on *The Doctors* and oral pathology faculty in a teaching hospital.

### WHAT'S ONE COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT BEAUTY PAGEANTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO DEBUNK?

That they are anti-feminist. I dare anyone to find a better conduit for personal development, public speaking, business relations and personal marketing for women or men.

### WHY SHOULD YOU BE THE NEXT "MISS CALIFORNIA USA?"

I'm experienced, mature and an excellent ambassador to invite others into pageantry.





# RENAISSANCE MAN

If you subscribe to [\*The Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry\*](#), you will likely recognize these covers from earlier this year, featuring beautiful nature photography from around the world. What you might not know is the man behind the cover is none other than Dean Avishai Sadan MBA '14, who enjoys using mixed media — photography and videography — to immortalize his travels around the globe. While his photography may have landed the covers, it's actually Sadan's research that has earned him the most acclaim at the journal. His 2009 article, "An in vitro evaluation of the long-term resin bond to a new densely sintered high-purity zirconium-oxide ceramic surface" — co-authored with Ostrow faculty members Sillas Duarte and Jin-Ho Phark as well as Penn Dental Medicine's Markus Blatz — has been *JPD's* most-cited article for the past five years. The *Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry* has a current impact factor of 2.095. Its editorial council is chaired by Baldwin Marchack DDS '71.



# ODD Jobs

## What was the most peculiar way you made ends meet during dental school?

BY REX LIU '86 DDS '90

My most unusual job in college was delivering singing telegrams in Las Vegas.

In high school, I used to see local TV commercials with a bunch of costumed characters, singing telegrams. I would say, "Mom, I want to do that." The response was your typical "OK ..." She knew better than to talk me out of it.

When I called them, auditioned and came home announcing that I now had a job delivering singing telegrams, my parents just about fell out of their chairs.

It required me to learn various songs with different themes: birthdays, anniversaries, "I Love You" messages, "I Messed Up" apologies, etc. These were set to familiar music, and I was given tapes to learn.

I would get phone calls for telegrams at all hours of the day and have to perform in casinos, hospitals and bars. Once, I even jumped out of a birthday cake. I had some costumes ready to go or would swing by the office along the way when I would get unusual requests. Can anyone get you to wear a "Pink Gorilla" or "Big Bird" costume, sing and dance — plus work with a kazoo, a tambourine and other props?

In high school, I had done some performing in choir and a show choir (much like the show, *Glee*) — except we were cooler, and nobody threw slushies at us. Our group, the Surrey Singers, had toured California and Nevada, and we even sang back-up for Paul Anka's show at the Aladdin.

I received \$25-\$50 per telegram, and this was in the late '80s, so that was a terrific wage back then. Some might say that it wasn't enough — and that you couldn't pay them any amount to do that.

It helped me save money for dental school and taught me to lose whatever inhibitions I might have. It also proved to be a great way to build my confidence to better interact with patients. The job taught me to think quickly, put people at ease and respond to an audience.

After nearly a 15-year hiatus from performing, I began to perform again after establishing my dental practice. I have performed in several musicals in town (including *A Chorus Line*, *Mame* and *42nd Street*), hosted a few fundraisers and a telethon and appeared in two local commercials (one for the newspaper and one for a political action committee).

My motto for my office staff is that no matter what, the show must go on. How "Vegas" is that?

*Did you have an odd job during dental school? Email us at [ostrow.communications@usc.edu](mailto:ostrow.communications@usc.edu) for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue of TroDent.*

PHOTO BY [LASZLO RATHONYI](#)



# MATCH GAME

## OSTROW COUPLES EDITION

Dental school can be an intense experience, so it's no wonder that so many lifelong relationships (both romantic and non-romantic in nature) tend to bud in the halls, labs and classrooms of the Norris Dental Science Center. Match the alumni couples with the ways in which they first met at Ostrow:

1

This couple met at a mixer but didn't begin dating until after dental school (she was already dating a classmate of his) when she broke up with her boyfriend.

2

This couple met in their orthodontics residency program. He thought she had a great sense of humor; she thought he was smart.

3

They met at the Delta Sigma Delta house, where he (and her then-boyfriend) lived at the time. After she broke up with her beau, these two had their first (and second) date at the Hollywood Bowl.

4

This couple met on the first day of PBL. She thought he was a snappy dresser; he thought her radiant smile matched her kind and generous personality.

5

He was in a second-floor lab, doing some lab work, when he saw her walking with one of her dental hygiene classmates. He thought she looked like his type, and they've been together ever since.

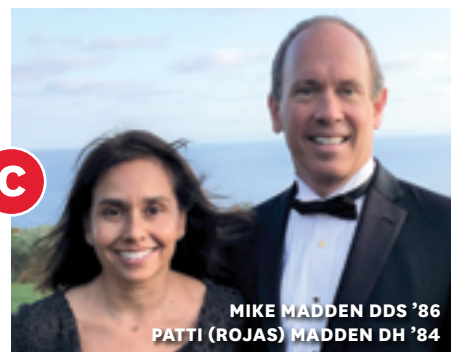
A



B



C



D



E



ANSWERS: 1C, 2E, 3B, 4D, 5A



# Digital Dentistry

*Dentures, a few clicks away.*

This fall, Ostrow introduced into its already robust digital workflow the opportunity for students to learn to use 3-D printing technology to create removable partial and complete dentures for their patients.

The groundbreaking move — USC is one of the nation's first dental schools to do this on a large scale — gives all third- and fourth-year students a leg-up on technology expected to become commonplace in the next five to 10 years.

The digital process replaces the traditional method, which meant sending a dental impression off to a lab and waiting weeks for the dentures to be made by hand.

Instead, dental students can expect to receive precise, custom-made dentures within days, which means fewer visits and far less time in the dental chair for patients.

"These dentures are more comfortable and pose less problems," explains Tae Kim PROS '01, associate professor of clinical dentistry and Removable Prosthodontics chair. "Digital fabrication also allows a second set of dentures to be prepared without going through all the clinical procedures again. We've had patients lose their dentures and have been able to deliver another set their next visit."

Visit [tinyurl.com/3D-dentures](http://tinyurl.com/3D-dentures) to see an actual set of dentures being printed.







Los Angeles resident DeTria Taylor, 45, receives a cleaning and dental restoration from Eileen Shah DDS '18.



# Something to Smile About

*Ostrow dental clinics offer free services to Skid Row's underserved population.*

BY MICHELLE MCCARTHY

A year ago, James Hartley, 51, was at what he refers to as his “road’s end.” Homeless, living on the streets of Skid Row and battling alcohol addiction, he was destitute and in despair. Additionally, his poor dental hygiene was affecting his self-esteem. “I couldn’t really smile,” he says. “I would cover my mouth or smile without exposing any teeth.”

*continued on [page 20](#) »*



**A**fter hitting rock bottom and seeking treatment at the **Midnight Mission**, Hartley noticed a flyer posted by the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry for its two clinics downtown that offer free dental services for low-income and homeless populations at the **Union Rescue Mission** (URM) and **John Wesley Community Health** (JWCH) center. “I decided, ‘OK, let me go and check this out.’” Little did he know, it was a decision that would help put his life back on track.

## DOWN AND OUT ON SKID ROW

“When you’re homeless, your oral health gets pushed to the side unless you’re in great pain,” says Kathy Elizondo, assistant professor of clinical dentistry and clinic director for the URM Dental Clinic. “They have so many other things going on.”

To help combat this problem, Ostrow established an eight-chair dental clinic at URM in 2000 that caters to the underserved in Downtown Los Angeles. The demand for services proved to be so high that in 2010, a second clinic with seven chairs was opened across the street at JWCH.

“I always considered the U.S. to be a rich country, and especially Los Angeles with all the glamour,” says Iranian-born Mehdi Mohammadi DDS ’12, assistant professor of clinical dentistry and clinic director for the JWCH Dental Clinic. “Going to Skid Row was an eye-opener to see how many people do not have access to oral care.”

Approximately 2,000 people are homeless in the area, which encompasses roughly 50 city blocks. (There are approximately 58,000 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County altogether.) Encampments line Skid Row’s streets with inhabitants who often face substance abuse and mental health issues.

All procedures at URM and JWCH are performed by fourth-year Ostrow dental students as part of a seven-week rotation. “We do everything from cleanings to fillings to root canals, dentures, partials, onlays and direct restorations,” says Karen Sierra DDS ’18, a student at JWCH.

Faculty is on hand to oversee the students’ work and offer guidance when needed. “Before we start any treatment, we go through the patient’s medical history and make sure everything is up to date,” says Mary Lou Wood DDS ’18, a student at URM. “Then we present our case to the faculty. There is a start check, prep check and final check.”

Elizondo says the fast-paced nature of the downtown clinics appeals to the students and makes them feel productive. “Most of the time, they’ll see two patients in the morning and two in the afternoon,” she says. “At school, it’s normally one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We try to keep our clinic very efficient.”

In 2016, URM saw 7,000 patients and rendered \$2 million worth of free dental work, while JWCH had more than 7,000 patient visits and rendered \$1.2 million worth of free dental work.

## YEARS SINCE LAST DENTAL VISIT

Reginald Drummer, 50, lived on Skid Row for a year and a half

and hadn’t been to a dentist since he was a child; at JWCH, he had 40 restorations, two extractions, a root canal and received removable partial dentures.

Before going to URM, Eli Handy, 63, says it was approaching two decades since he had been to a dentist. He had decayed teeth restored, was given a cleaning and received removable partial dentures.

And JWCH patient Reginia Austell, 64, says she couldn’t afford to have her teeth looked at and simply stopped eating foods such as lettuce and nuts for years due to pain. She had all of her teeth extracted and received complete dentures.

“I’ve seen a couple of people where the calculus on their teeth is pretty much what’s holding them in the mouth,” says Hessam Toossi DDS ’18, a student at JWCH. “Sometimes you have to say, ‘I’m going to clean your teeth, but there’s a good chance they’re going to fall out.’ I’ve never experienced anybody saying they want to hold onto bad teeth, because a lot of the time they’re causing them pain.”

In addition to pain and discomfort, poor dental health can lead to medical issues such as cardiovascular disease, bacterial lung infections and malnutrition as well as diminished self-esteem. According to Elizondo, your mouth is a reflection of the condition of your body. So if someone is not taking good care of his or her teeth, there are usually other organ systems that are problematic.

“I used to smile all the time,” Drummer says. “I brought this picture of me to the clinic that showed what my smile used to be like. Now I have a full smile again. It’s impacted every area of my life. I’m confident. I got the résumé done. I’ve been applying for jobs. When I see people, it’s just different. I don’t have to keep my head down.”

Hartley says with the level of professionalism he witnessed from both students and faculty at the clinic, he isn’t surprised that Ostrow is renowned for churning out some of the world’s best dentists.

“I thought I was going to be in pain or bleeding, but there was nothing at all,” says Luz Valenzuela, 46, who had her mandibular anterior teeth extracted and received a removable partial denture at JWCH. “I told the student who did it, ‘If this counts as your graduation, you already passed.’”

Austell adds: “If the students had any questions, they always called a professor over before they did anything to make sure they did it correctly.”

## TEARS OF JOY

For many of the patients, even more impressive than the students’ professionalism and skill level was their compassion. “I was treated like a human being,” Hartley says. “They made me feel very comfortable despite my situation because there’s a bit of shame associated when you’re in those types of circumstances. I noticed there was always laughter in the background.”

It’s this deeper human connection and interaction with individuals the students might never come in contact with otherwise that Ostrow hopes will foster a sense of charitable giving.

“Ostrow likes to teach students the positive aspects of





**“I can’t tell you how much it’s changed the way I present myself in public and in meeting new people and applying for jobs. My self-esteem returned, and I could smile. It just helped me tremendously.”**

—James Hartley

PHOTO BY [HANNAH BENET](#)

« continued from page 21

service learning, community practice and professional philanthropy,” Mohammadi says. “Before coming to this clinic, they thought, ‘After I graduate, I have to go to a private practice.’ Now they know there are other options out there, and one is a community clinic that provides for the underserved. Many of them now say they’ll consider joining a community clinic after graduation.”

The rewarding nature of the work and ability to change lives is what brings Elizondo, who has worked at URM since 2003, back to Skid Row day after day. “I especially love to do dentures and partials just to see the big smiles when we deliver them. They’re able to eat well. They’re able to speak better. For job interviews, they were embarrassed and not able to present themselves properly because they’re missing teeth. Now they can go to interviews and secure work, which is key. And it just lifts their spirits.”

URM student Vyvy Pham DDS ’18 recalls two patients in particular who cried after receiving their dentures. “They’d gone so long without teeth, they forgot what they looked like with them. That was memorable.”

Sierra says patients are always quick to show their gratitude for the free dental work. People have even spotted her walking down the street to the clinic in her scrubs and stopped her to say thank you. “They’re always thanking us from beginning to end.” It’s an experience that has influenced her future career path. “I initially didn’t know if I wanted to go into private practice, but after going to these clinics, it has helped me figure out what I want to do — community dentistry.”

No matter where they end up after graduation, the students say they will definitely be back to volunteer. “My plans are for sure to come back,” Toossi says. “I don’t think I can stray too far from it.”

## “MY WHOLE LIFE HAS CHANGED”

A lot has happened for Hartley since he found that Ostrow dental flyer at the Midnight Mission and received nine dental procedures, including removable partial dentures.

For starters, he is about to celebrate one year of sobriety. He now has a job, an apartment and recently bought a car. “My whole life has changed, and the basis of that change was from the dental procedures I had done,” he says. “My self-esteem returned and I could smile. I could talk and was less of an introvert. It just helped me so tremendously.”

He even joined a running club and completed the 2017 L.A. Marathon. Next year, he will travel to Israel to run the international marathon.

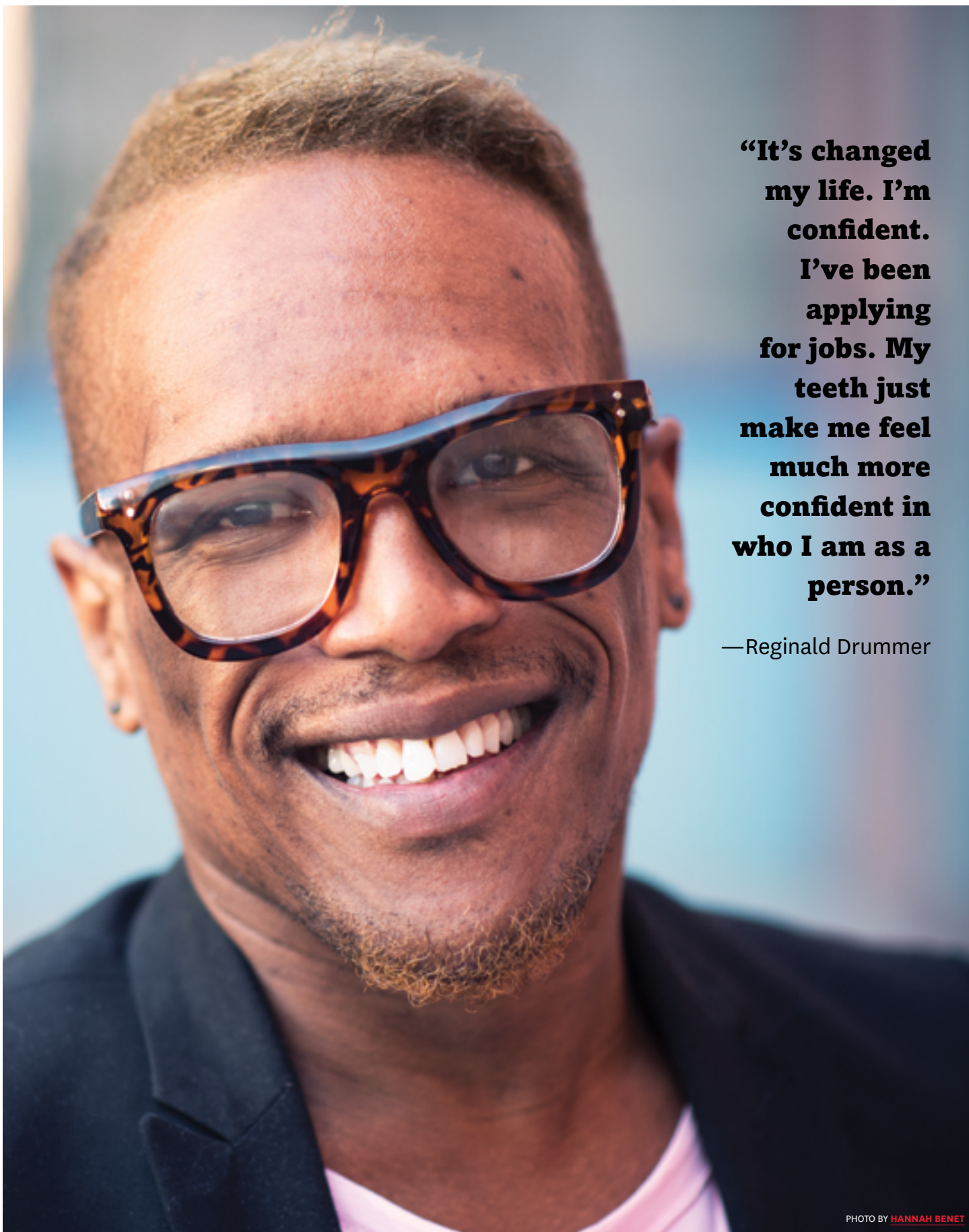
“All this happened because my self-esteem returned and enabled me to self-actualize,” he explains. “So my whole life has changed completely. Before I got sober, I was in a place where I physically could no longer drink, but I didn’t want to be sober. I didn’t want to be where I was, and I didn’t have any place I wanted to go. It was hopelessness. Today, I have a life. I have a full life.”

Los Angeles resident Maria Saenz, 45, is being fitted for dentures by Farid Farahnik DDS ’18.










**“It’s changed  
my life. I’m  
confident.  
I’ve been  
applying  
for jobs. My  
teeth just  
make me feel  
much more  
confident in  
who I am as a  
person.”**

—Reginald Drummer

PHOTO BY [HANNAH BENET](#)

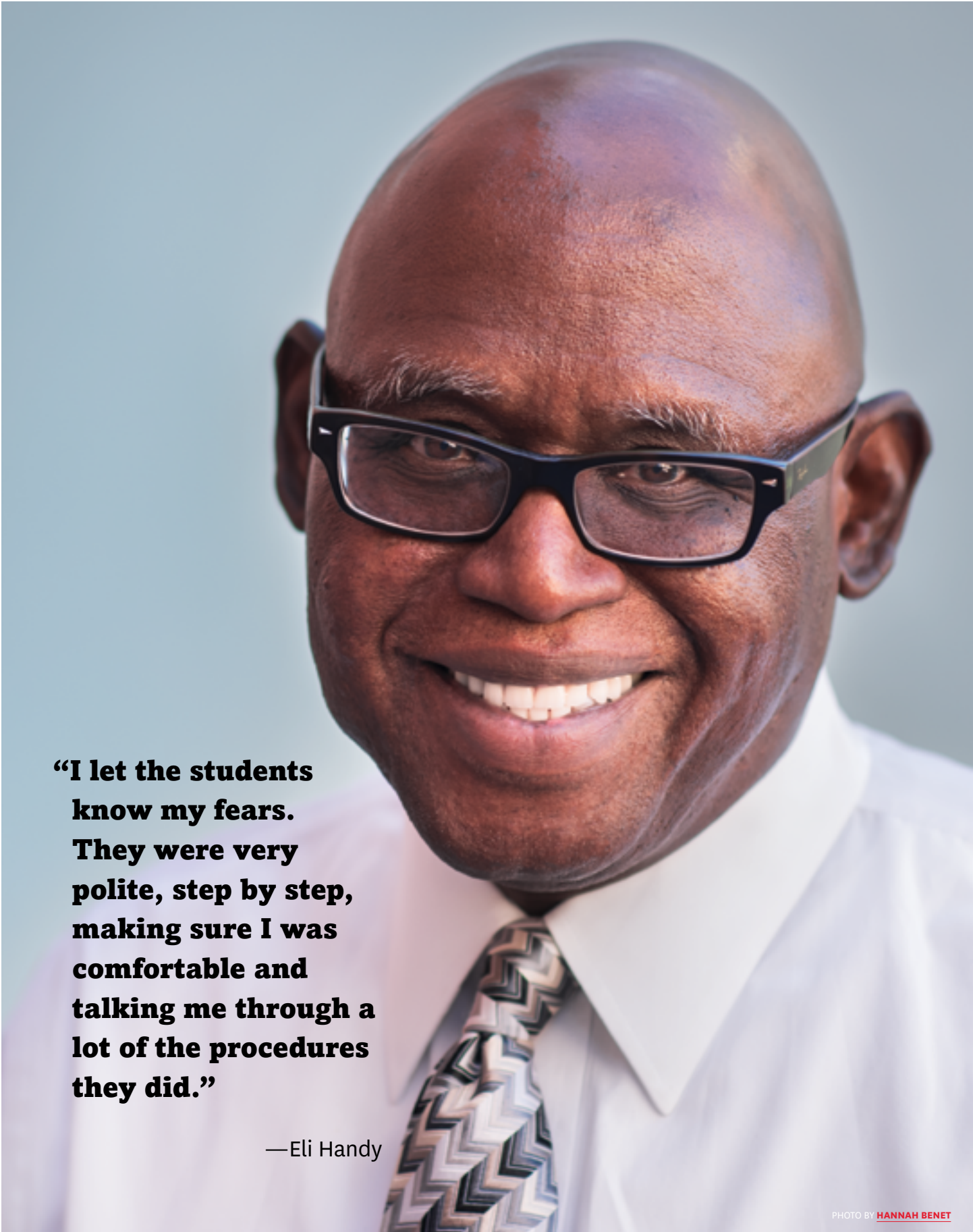




**“I was always  
talking with my  
hand over my  
mouth or, if I was  
laughing, I would  
put my head  
down.”**

—Reginia Austell

PHOTO BY [HANNAH BENET](#)

A close-up portrait of a smiling Black man with glasses, wearing a white shirt and a patterned tie. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue-grey.

**“I let the students  
know my fears.  
They were very  
polite, step by step,  
making sure I was  
comfortable and  
talking me through a  
lot of the procedures  
they did.”**

—Eli Handy

PHOTO BY [HANNAH BENET](#)



**“I told the student  
who did it, ‘If this  
counts as your  
graduation, you  
already passed.’”**

—Luz Valenzuela


PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET





# PHOTOGRAPHING BHUTAN





Shaffer has a particular fondness for this picture, which he captured on his first day in Bhutan. “It was so amazingly beautiful and pristine and out of my usual world,” he says.

*Rather than settling into retirement, Ostrow alumnus Barry Shaffer '70, DDS '74 is following his long dental career with a new life as a successful photographer.*

BY SUSAN BELL

With its steady rumble of traffic, Encino's bustling Ventura Boulevard could not seem more far removed from the peace, the pristine air and the sweeping mountain views of the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

Barry Shaffer, however, feels at home in both these contrasting worlds. After serving for more than 40 years as a dentist in Encino, Calif., his second career as an accomplished photographer is blossoming with the publication of his first major fine-art photography book, *Echoes of Bhutan*. The book was launched earlier this year at the prestigious Telluride Mountainfilm Festival.

*continued on [page 30](#) »*

In one photograph, children wearing traditional clothing grin impishly as they pause on their walk to school along a rural road. In another — taken after Shaffer snuck out of his hotel early on his first-ever morning in Bhutan — clouds are banked over snow-scattered Himalayan foothills while a traditional Dzong temple occupies the foreground. “There’s a particular fondness for that image,” Shaffer says, “because it was so amazingly beautiful and pristine and so out of my usual world.”

The photographs featured in the book span a period of 15 years and were selected from more than 5,000 taken over the course of three trips Shaffer made to Bhutan. He made the first in 2001 as a private citizen, the second as a photographer for the Tribal Trust Foundation in 2014 and the third in 2015 at the invitation of Bhutan’s government and travel industry — a rare honor. The photographs are accompanied by written contributions from some of the most illustrious members of Bhutan’s ruling class, including its Queen Mother, fourth King and Prime Minister. The images portray the country’s unique culture and aim to capture the principles behind the nation’s commitment to “Gross National Happiness” — its signature quality-of-life indicator, which prioritizes civic contentment, cultural preservation and environmental sustainability above material development.

### “A KIND OF SHANGRI-LA”

Telluride, Colo., was a fitting choice to launch the book. It was where Shaffer was first inspired to take up photography in the

1990s and then later to travel to Bhutan after hearing renowned Indo-Tibetan-Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman speak at the festival in 2000.

“Hearing Dr. Thurman describe a very pure Buddhist culture among the beautiful mountains and valleys of the Himalayas — a place he portrayed as ‘The Land of the Thunder Dragon’ — made it sound like a kind of Shangri-La,” Shaffer says. “Dentistry is a rewarding profession, but it is also confined to a particular space. I always had the urge to explore, and it was such an inspiring talk that I felt destined to go, and nine months later I did.”

Noting that “Bhutan is a magnet for people who are searching for ‘the answer,’” Shaffer, who at the time was 52, admits that his first trip to Bhutan corresponded to a period in his life when his own search for life’s meaning had grown more powerful.

Shaffer is not a Buddhist, but he does feel a life-long affinity for the mountains — a place, he says, “where I’m able to maybe be a believer.” This spiritual quality in the landscape is what drew him first to Telluride and then to Bhutan.

He made his first trip in 2001, flying from L.A. to Bangkok and then on to Bhutan’s tiny Paro airport, nestled among the steep mountains of the Himalayas.

“Coming off the plane the first time was just like nothing I could have ever thought actually existed,” Shaffer says. “It was so unique, like a wonderland — majestic, tranquil and stunningly beautiful.”

He spent weeks camping and trekking to remote parts of the country to photograph Bhutan’s landscapes and people.

“It’s a land of ancient monasteries, fluttering prayer flags and unforgettable beauty, where one cannot help but feel a lasting sense of peace,” he says. “I think that if you were to write down how human life was supposed to be, then this was it — a great sense of spirituality, of happiness, of camaraderie, a very clean and pristine environment. And an ever-present sense of karma.”

He pays tribute to the tremendous warmth and regard for people he experienced in Bhutan. “I could not distinguish if somebody was a family member or if they had never met before,” he says.

### A BALANCED EDUCATION

Growing up in L.A., the son of a home-maker and a real estate investor, Shaffer always dreamed of becoming a dentist. “I had a couple of really dynamic dentists as a kid,” he says, with a laugh.

After earning his bachelor’s in history from USC Dornsife in 1970, he attended Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, graduating in 1974.

In 2000, he began to cut back on his dental practice to start focusing on photography, enrolling at Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, Calif., from 2002 to 2004.

Shaffer said he is grateful for the balance his USC education gave him between the sciences and the humanities. “It’s really important to have that kind of exposure because in essence we live our lives day by day in the form of the humanities.”

He is also quick to pay tribute to his wife, Barbara, who shares the title credit on *Echoes of Bhutan* and who he says has been instrumental, both in the book’s development and in his photography career. “She was a large part of the 2001 and 2015 trips and hugely influential,” he says.

All proceeds from sales of the book, which also includes a foreword written by Thurman, will benefit the Tarayana Foundation, a nonprofit organization established by Bhutan’s Queen Mother to uplift and enhance lives of the country’s vulnerable individuals and communities.

Shaffer said one of the things that drew him to photography was the same ability to connect to people’s lives that he had experienced in his dental career. “I knew the time would come when I would no longer practice dentistry, but I wanted to still be able to maintain those kinds of connections,” he said. “And with photography, you can.”



# **Ostrow's** **got Talent**

**BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14,  
BRYAN KANG MA '18  
& YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16**

As one of the nation's top dental schools, Ostrow has long had some of the nation's most talented and promising dental students walking its halls. But many students' gifts extend far beyond the dental cubicle, with some having distinguished themselves in many other fields, including sports and the arts. Meet five such students who share with us their talents in the kitchen, on the field and even behind the wheel:

*continued on [page 32](#) »*

# FUJON ANAYATI

## Chef

For as long as Fujon Anayati DH '19 can remember, she has been drawn to the culinary life.

On Saturday mornings, while most kids her age were watching cartoons, Anayati tuned into the Food Network, watching the ways in which the nation's culinary greats worked in the kitchen.

"I started to analyze the specific tactics used to prepare certain foods," she says. "And I thought I might as well give it a try."

Her earliest dishes often involved using Sriracha and other hot sauces to create new foods that really packed some heat — like Korean-inspired Persian chicken kabob with kimchi fried rice and Panko-crusted honey Sriracha chicken with pasta.

As a teen, the Beverly Hills-native continued her passion by enrolling in her high school's culinary arts program, even competing in regional competitions across Southern California.

In one competition, her glazed chicken breast and pan-fried potatoes earned her a ranking of 7 out of 120 student chefs.

"The competitions would get so intense," she says. "But hey, as they say, if you cannot handle the heat, then get out of the kitchen."

She also found that she learned about other cultures, including her own, through their fare. Her grandparents and parents, who immigrated to the United States after the Iranian Revolution, would teach her recipes and traditions from back home that helped her get in touch with her Persian roots.

When it came time to choose a career path, Anayati surprised everyone — perhaps even herself — by hanging up her apron and pursuing dental hygiene.

"The whole dental field has also always been very fascinating to me," she says. "I felt the need to give back to my community, so I thought I could do so by helping others with their oral health."

Anayati began Ostrow's dental hygiene program earlier this fall and admits her hectic schedule doesn't afford her much time to cook. "I rarely have the time to sit down and enjoy a home-cooked meal," she says. "Ostrow's dental hygiene program is no joke, but in the end you come out stronger than ever."

While Anayati might have put her culinary aspirations on the back burner for now, she does want to return to it eventually, hoping to open her own restaurant one day.

"Culinary arts will always be a vital part of my life," she says. "It puts me in my comfort zone and allows me to express my creativity and learn about other cultures through the dishes that I make."

—J.H.







## COREY BORNSTEIN

Professional Paintballer

PHOTO COURTESY OF COREY BORNSTEIN

He holds his breath and cautiously peeks around the corner.

Whiz. Splat! Splat! Splat!

Quickly, Corey Bornstein DDS '19 ducks for cover. "Where are they shooting from?" he wonders as he looks over his shoulder to see three explosions of rainbow-colored dye slowly dripping down the concrete wall behind him.

He checks his ammo tank, takes a deep breath and readies himself to follow his team's strategy, getting to the buzzer before the other guys — all without feeling the sting (hopefully) of a paintball hitting his body.

It's professional paintball, and it's the way Bornstein, a third-year dental student and No. 90 for the **L.A. Infamous** — one of 16 professional teams comprising the National Xball League (NXL) — spends his time away from Ostrow.

Bornstein fell in love with paintball at 11 years old while playing a game or two with his older brother on a family vacation.

"I was immediately hooked," Bornstein

says. "As soon as we returned from that trip, I began to save my money so I could buy my own gear."

It became something Bornstein and his older brother, Jason (who also played for the L.A. Infamous until his retirement in 2016 after a shoulder injury), did every weekend, eventually competing in local tournaments.

In 2005, when Bornstein was 15 years old, he and his brother began competing nationally, eventually placing in the top three of the semi-professional division, which thrust them into the professional bracket.

While pursuing his bachelor's degree in nutrition and dietetics from California State University Long Beach, Bornstein spent weekends competing across the United States as well as Europe, with both national and international leagues.

By 24, he had secured the national collegiate paintball title, won his first professional tournament and had been recruited to the L.A. Infamous.

Since Bornstein joined the L.A. Infamous

(a gig he continues to this day), the team has won four times.

Though he has earned distinction in the paintball world — he was one of the league's top-ranked players in 2015 — Bornstein is careful not to let the game get in the way of his studies.

"School has always been a priority to me from the very beginning and still is to this day," he says. And realizing that a long-term paintball career is not necessarily an option — "there are no \$1-million contracts in paintball," he says — Bornstein aims to apply his love for competition and emphasis on technique into studying dentistry.

"I've always been interested in the human body and health," Bornstein says. "Pursuing a career in dentistry has been a perfect segue, merging my interest in health, science and artistry. And let's face it," he says with a smile, "There's a modicum of competition in dental school, and that's something that I can appreciate."

—B.K.



# TEDDY BAUM

Racer/Hockey Player

A long buzz signals the end of the first quarter. Edward “Teddy” Baum DDS ’21 looks up at the scoreboard and hears his coach call the play from the sidelines. Baum and his hockey teammates have one final drive to tie the game and send it into overtime. The whistle blows and ...

Heading into the straightaway, cruising in his 1998 Nissan 240SX at 100 miles per hour, Baum looks at his gauges and tightly grips his steering wheel. Coming upon a curve, he eases the clutch and shifts the car into second. When his car catches the corner’s apex, Baum begins spinning out at 90 miles per hour and ...

Baum’s secret talents are not for the faint of heart. When he is not working on his first-year dental studies, you can find him playing hockey or racing cars.

Baum’s love for hockey began when he was just 10 years old, watching a neighbor shoot around a hockey puck in his front yard.

“I was hooked,” Baum says.

When a hockey accident cost him his front teeth, Baum wound up in the chair of cosmetic dentist Phil Mendelovitz.

“We instantly connected through our love of cars,” Baum says, explaining that, in his free time, Mendelovitz was an avid racecar driver.

Baum began working on Mendelovitz’s pit crew during races to learn more about racecar driving.

“I noticed many of the tools used to work on cars are also used in dentistry,” Baum said, referring to torque wrenches, picks and rotary tools. “I became infatuated with the manual dexterity and precision necessary.”

To thank him for his work, Mendelovitz paid for Baum to attend multiple racing and driving schools. Since then, Baum has been driving open track days and, two years ago, began wheel-to-wheel racing.

When it came time to choose a career, though, Baum, who comes from a long line of orthodontists, knew that neither hockey nor racing were easy career options.

“You have to be the best in the world to make it in either hockey or racing and have the funds to match it,” he concedes.

Still, he hopes to take aspects of racing with him into the dental profession.

“I actually became infatuated with dentistry because of my mechanical background,” he says.

Though his first year’s heavy workload has slowed his racing passion, Baum still manages to get out on the ice regularly.

“Hockey is my outlet,” he says. “I tend to get antsy when I can’t make it out on the ice at least once a week.”

—B.K.

PHOTO BY HANNAH BENET



# TAN KHUU

Photographer



PHOTO BY **HANNAH BENET**

**T**an Khuu can't remember a time that he hasn't been around cameras.

As a boy, he would watch his father, a photography hobbyist, spend a considerable amount of time behind the lens.

But even with all that exposure, it wasn't until Khuu was 17, taking a photography class in high school, that he realized he also had a passion for photography.

In his semester-long class, Khuu spent nearly 10 hours a week learning to shoot and develop black-and-white pictures.

After high school, Khuu's photography hobby fell out of focus. "I was mainly focused on school because I wanted to become a physician," Khuu says.

"What's funny is that once I got into medical school, I became a prolific photographer. It was a great way to relieve stress. I took my camera to almost every school event."

Before he knew it, he became the unofficial school photographer. His skill inevitably caught the attention of one of Khuu's classmates who asked him to photograph his family.

"I was happy to do it and did not expect

to be paid for it," Khuu says. "But he insisted, and from that day onward, my hobby evolved into a part-time job."

These days, Khuu considers photography "one of his careers." He's been hired to photograph classmates, faculty and other practicing professionals who need images for marketing purposes.

Khuu received his medical degree in 2012 and spent six months training to deliver babies as an obstetrician-gynecologist until his interest in the field seemed to diminish.

"In truth, I was lost until my girlfriend (now my wife) suggested that I look into dentistry," Khuu says. "She is a dentist herself and knew how much I love working with my hands, how picky I am about little details in my work and how much I love being a clinician."

Now well on his way to receiving his doctor of dental surgery degree in May 2018, his fire for dentistry burns brighter than the fire for photography ever did.

"I'm obsessed with it. Even if I won the lottery today and became set for life, I still would practice dentistry as much as I can," he says.

When it comes to practicing dentistry,

Khuu has found his photography skills come in handy.

"Documentation is important in this field. For example, shooting with a macro lens will allow you to see every detail in high clarity; every imperfection is apparent," he says.

"Keep documenting, and you will have a library of images that you can use to educate your patients as well as your colleagues about the work that you do, the details you pay attention to and why it matters."

While Khuu found a way to incorporate his talent in his soon-to-be profession, what he enjoys most about photography is what he learns about people when he shoots their portraits.

"From my experience, I noticed that there's a disconnect between the subject's true self and what is communicated non-verbally when the subject is in front of the camera," Khuu says.

"The challenge and joy for me are to bridge this gap and capture the essence of the subject in a way that is both compelling and esthetic. But what's most gratifying is seeing the subject's satisfaction with his or her image."

—Y.P.

# TRUMAN NGUYEN

Pianist



PHOTO BY **HANNAH BENET**

**B**efore entering dental school, Truman Nguyen was already skilled at working with his hands.

In fact, the fourth-year dental student was an acclaimed pianist before even hitting his teenage years.

Nguyen, who was taught how to play the piano by his older sister, was just 6 years old when he was first introduced to the grand instrument, and he says he was instantly hooked.

"I used to practice piano for hours each day, and there were times that I loved a song so much that I would practice until 1 a.m., when my parents told me to stop because they needed to sleep," he says.

Though he received several awards from music competitions throughout grade school, Nguyen said one of his greatest honors was as an undergraduate when he was asked to play at his university's scholarship dinner gala.

"This was a very wonderful blessing for me because I got to perform for so many

professors and alumni of my university who I admired," he shares.

When it came to choosing a profession, Nguyen chose dentistry because he loved the science and artistry that are combined to help improve people's smiles and overall health.

"The lessons that I have learned through performing piano help me to be sensitive towards the needs of my patients," he says.

A devout Catholic, Nguyen credits his virtuosic piano playing to God as well as his parents, siblings, friends and family, who encouraged him to develop his talent from such a young age.

Whether he is playing the piano or practicing dentistry, he lives to be of service to others.

"Although playing a piano song or doing a filling may seem like a small thing to do, so much grace can come through those small things," he says.

As a busy dental student preparing for graduation and board exams, Nguyen admits

he's not able to get behind the piano as much as he used to.

"During dental school, I have been so busy that I play mostly for fun during the weekends for friends and family, or weekdays when I visit church to relax after a long day," he says.

"I find that performing music allows me to connect with family and friends, and dentistry is an extension of that desire to continue to help and serve others through my gifts and talents," he adds.


After graduation, Nguyen plans to continue to commit to his faith.

"Wherever my future takes me, I want to make sure that my life is truly beautiful, and I know that the only possible way that I can live a good and beautiful life is by staying close to Mary," he says.

Watch Nguyen play at:  
[tinyurl.com/trumannguyen](https://tinyurl.com/trumannguyen).

—Y.P.



A full-page photograph of a dentist, a Black man with short dark hair, wearing a blue surgical cap and a blue protective gown. He is wearing a dental operating microscope with two blue lenses and a central light source. He is focused on a patient, a young woman with dark hair, who is lying back in a dental chair. The dentist is using a dental instrument on the patient's teeth. The background is a clinical setting with various dental equipment and a blurred figure of another person in the background.

Lana Kanen, 18, (pictured here with Trey Coke DDS '19 ) visited Ostrow's Urgent Care clinic after chipping her tooth.

# DELIVERING SMILES UNDER PRESSURE

BY STEPHANIE CORRAL

*Ostrow faculty and students work together to provide urgent care to patients in pain and keep them coming back for regular check-ups.*

*continued on [page 38](#) »*

**F**or nearly a week, Julia Fregoso experienced tooth pain so severe that she was unable to sleep, let alone eat or drink. The pain, resulting from a molar she broke last December, landed Fregoso in Ostrow's **[Urgent Care and Dental Trauma Center](#)** at the recommendation of her mother.

"The night after my extraction was the first night in almost a week that I actually slept throughout the night," Fregoso says. "Less than 24 hours later, I was able to eat and speak with no pain and little to no swelling. I'm feeling so much better!"

Fregoso is a textbook example of the kind of patients that walk into Ostrow's urgent care clinic, which is dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of dental emergencies.

Under the supervision of faculty dentists, Ostrow dental students provide treatment at the clinic during a required two-week rotation that is divided between their third and fourth year of dental school.

"We mostly get patients who have not had regular dental treatment, so the problem gets compounded over time, and the pain becomes unbearable," says Elieka Salamipour DDS '19, who recently finished her first one-week rotation as a third-year student.

On any given day, students can treat anywhere from 20 to 45 patients with a wide range of dental needs, such as root canals, extractions, cavities and cracked teeth.

"It's nonstop," Salamipour says. "You don't know who's going to come through the door or what the patient is going to need. The rotation does so much for developing and refining a dental student's approach to diagnosis and patient care."

Every week, approximately 10 students rotate through the clinic, where they assess and diagnose patients on their own before presenting their approach to supervising faculty who are there to intervene or make recommendations, only if necessary.

"Basically, as soon as we meet the patient, we are on our own," says Jimmy Huettner DDS '19, who also recently completed his first one-week rotation. "We diagnose and treat them exactly like we would be doing in the real world."

The clinic's unique rotation format can largely be credited to its director, Ramon Roges, who is also an associate professor of clinical dentistry at Ostrow.

"Dr. Roges has really set up a phenomenal rotation in that it creates a learning environment for us as students and a really efficient way to treat patients, helping as many as we can each day," Huettner says.

Roges believes the rotation teaches students invaluable skills such as time management because they see multiple patients and treat multiple conditions.

"They also get emergency dental treatment experience, which sooner or later they are going to need in their private practice," Roges says.

When students return to the clinic for their fourth-year rotation, Roges often sees a huge difference in their abilities.

"They have more self-confidence, they work faster, and they know how to treat the patient," Roges says. "They also know how to communicate better."

**"I've learned to put people at ease, work with different personalities and de-escalate concerns and fears."**

**— Elieka Salamipour DDS '19**

Even though she recently finished her first rotation, Salamipour already feels more comfortable when seeing patients.

"I have become more confident in examinations and diagnosis," says Salamipour, who now volunteers at the clinic in her free time. "The urgent care faculty is phenomenal. Having them there to bounce off ideas and questions is great. There is so much to learn from them and their different approaches help you refine your personal style as a dentist."

Besides having to think quickly and work well under pressure in an emergency dental setting, students must also learn how to work with patients during what is arguably not their finest hour.

"Most of the patients you are going to see in emergency are in pain, so they are not happy campers," Roges says. "So you are dealing with an individual that either has discomfort or is seeking some kind of relief, and sometimes it can be difficult to interact with them."

Working under these circumstances can be stressful for any dentist, but it is a challenge that Salamipour relishes.

"You need compassion to understand the pain of patients," Salamipour says. "I get a sense of pride being able to work with people in compromising situations. I've learned to put people at ease, work with different personalities and de-escalate concerns and fears."

Salamipour recently met with a patient who had a longstanding fear of the dentist.

"At the end of the session, she gave me a hug and said, 'Keep doing what you are doing. I'm looking forward to my next appointment,'" Salamipour says.

Ryan Shapiro MCM '11 has had his fair share of dental appointments at Ostrow — he's been a patient since he was 12 years old.

"My dad brought me after I knocked out two of my teeth doing something stupid on my bike," Shapiro says. "I was in pain and embarrassed about how I looked. The staff at USC was very kind and professional over several visits, making my teeth look even better than ever before."

Shapiro went on to attend USC and played on the 2000 football team. Roges made the mouthguard he used on the Trojan football field.

Even though he graduated from USC in 2011 with a graduate degree in communication management, Shapiro continues to entrust his dental care to the Ostrow team.

Roges says it is rewarding when patients like Shapiro keep returning, but he especially enjoys being able to provide dental care to those who need it the most.

"We treat a lot of patients that come from the surrounding communities who cannot afford to go to a private dental office," Roges says.

Once their urgent dental issues are treated, Roges urges them to become Ostrow patients for their regular dental care.

"You don't want to keep waiting for another emergency to have to come back again," Roges says. "You don't want to have a domino effect, to go from one emergency to the other. We want our friends in the community to be healthy."





Eric Chiccone DDS '18 provides treatment to Analine Sanchez, 58, who came to Urgent Care complaining of jaw pain.

*“I try to influence children with a positive dental experience, but what I personally gain out of the interaction is just as fulfilling and inspiring. It gives me purpose.”*



PHOTO BY **HANNAH BENET**

**M**y normal day involves playing animal games, singing songs, cleaning out “sugar bugs” and painting teeth. Who wouldn’t love stepping back into your childhood every day? Specializing in pediatric dentistry was not my original plan, but following my passion led me to the profession that I love.

Although I always loved working with kids, I never considered that it might be the path I was being led on for a reason. Growing up, I enjoyed volunteering with different programs that involved teaching at summer schools and coaching sports summer camps, but I never gave much thought to where I was spending all of my free time. What kept me coming back was the feeling that in some way I might be making a difference. I have always looked for a profession that would allow me to make a difference and help people.

I have been fortunate to have mentors throughout my life who have helped me on my road to pediatrics. One of those paths led me to the office of Kent Ochiai DDS '87, PROS '89, who helped me discover and pursue my interest in dentistry. Another path led me to the basement of the dental school where I started my pediatric training with amazing teachers like Gardner Beale DDS '76 and Dr. Julie Jenks, whom I still learn from to this day. Of all of the people who have influenced me, there is one particular person who changed the course of my life forever, and I only crossed paths with her for five days.

My life-altering person was a 9-year-old girl whom I met as a dental student when I traveled to Nicaragua with the Ayuda International program. I was in my third year of dental school and met this young girl who was hesitant to even sit in my chair. All I could hear was, “*Yo tengo miedo.*” Those infamous words that all

pediatric dentists have heard, “I’m scared.” Looking back on that patient, I can’t recall exactly what work was completed or what teeth we treated, but I can describe every look she gave me. I remember the tears in her eyes the first day, the hesitation as I counted her teeth, the clenched damp hands and nervous crying as we started her first day of treatment. There were many days that I wasn’t sure if she would return, but she came back — each time taking less coercion to sit in the chair. Finally, on the last day of the clinic, she came with no tears and went straight to my chair to complete her treatment. When we were done, she proudly took me outside to introduce me to her waiting family and her new baby brother. This little girl has no idea she changed my path forever.

From then on, it all made sense. Pediatrics and community health seemed to go hand in hand for me. There are so many children who don’t have access to dental care for various reasons such as financial hardships, education or the logistics of adults taking the time off work and kids missing school. It amazed me that this access-to-care issue could be found in my own community. My introduction to dental school programs such as the USC Mobile Clinic, the Ayuda clinics and the QueensCare + USC Mobile Clinic were some of the most memorable experiences of my dental training.

The fact that I was given the opportunity to return to USC as director of the **QueensCare + USC Mobile Dental Program** has brought me back to where it all began for me. Providing dental care to these children gives me purpose and inspires me daily. It is a constant reminder of why I went into dentistry: to make a difference and to truly help those who need it. I try to influence children with a positive dental experience, but what I personally gain out of the interaction is just as fulfilling and inspiring. It gives me purpose.



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