

# ODA Today

*A publication of the Ohio Dental Association focusing on dentistry in Ohio*

## Stark County Dental Society recruits new members with innovative programs

By Jackie Best  
ODA Managing Editor

The Stark County Dental Society received the 2017 Membership Award Program for Success (MAP for Success) Most Innovative Recruitment and Retention Initiative for its membership events and efforts.

The Stark County Dental Society held several programs that helped with recruitment and retention, as well as created a dues program for the Mercy General Practice Residency.

"It's a team effort," said Dr. K. "Ragu" Ragunathan, Stark County Dental Society past president. "Our goals were to engage, excite and encourage. When you have a team effort, anything can be done, and our mission was carried out by the whole group."

As a result of their efforts, the Stark County Dental Society had a 97.4 percent renewal rate from 2016 to 2017 and had the fifth best renewal rate out of the 25 component societies in Ohio. Additionally, the Stark County Dental Society became eligible for an additional delegate to the ODA House of Delegates based on their membership numbers.

"The Membership Committee is comprised of a range of ages from 30 plus years of experience to less than five years. That allowed us to reach out comfortably to every dentist in our area, through a grass roots approach – handshakes, face to face and phone calls. We had a great year," said Dr. Steve Smith, chair of the SCDS Membership Council.

The dental society held three special events throughout the year that helped them recruit and retain members – the Stark County Oral Health Bowl, A Salute to Veterans with Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise, and the Stark County Dental Society Annual Holiday Party.

The Stark County Oral Health Bowl took place at the Pro Football Hall of Fame featuring a football themed program with all encouraged



*Photo submitted by Stark County Dental Society*  
**Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise with Stark County Dental Society Past President Dr. K. "Ragu" Ragunathan at the Stark County Dental Society's event A Salute to Veterans with Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise. The Stark County Dental Society received the 2017 Membership Award Program for Success (MAP for Success) Most Innovative Recruitment and Retention Initiative for its membership events and efforts.**

For resources and information to help with grassroots membership outreach efforts, visit [oda.org/member-resources/membership-recruitment-and-retention/](http://oda.org/member-resources/membership-recruitment-and-retention/)

to wear their favorite team's football jersey. The evening's agenda included a game-day buffet, a "playbook" rolling out the newly formed SCDS Charitable Foundation, and featured Eva Grayzel, a nationally recognized master storyteller. Grayzel spoke about her personal experience with oral cancer and the importance of early detection. About 92 people attended the event.

Ragu said that thinking outside of the box and hosting the event at the Pro Football Hall of Fame instead of at a restaurant or other venue helped with turnout.

A Salute to Veterans with Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise took place at the MAPS Museum in

Canton. The event took place on Veterans Day to honor all who have served and thank those who contributed to the Stark County Dental Society's Vision for Veterans programs. Fred Haise, who is a veteran and astronaut, was the featured speaker at the event and he spoke about his vision that "failure is not an option." About 182 people attended the event.

Ragu said a lot of great promotions in advance helped this event to be successful. The idea for the event started because they wanted to highlight what the Stark County Dental Society is doing to help veterans, and the idea mushroomed into a much larger event

featuring Haise as a speaker. Ragu added that a big, positive response from the community helped the event.

The Stark County Dental Society also hosted a New Member Reception at the Annual SCDS Holiday Party, which has increased attendance of new members at the party and helps provide an opportunity for new members to meet each other and develop friendships. About 99 people attended the holiday party. Ragu said that new members were invited to attend the holiday party for free as an expression of welcome.

Through these events, the Stark County Dental Society recruited 14 new members in 2016.

"What seems to be working well is the invitation by an enthusiastic, established SCDS member to a new, younger member to attend a dental society event or program as their guest,"

wrote the Stark County Dental Society in its MAP for Success application. "This has been an ice-breaker and the formation of a mentor relationship."

Ragu said the most important parts of planning these events were planning ahead, making it a team effort and thinking outside the box. He also said the dental society had to be willing to spend money on the event in order for it to be successful.

"If you have a little bit of loss of revenue on an event it's OK, because when you gain so many members it kind of evens out," Ragu said. "To have the business flourish, you have to spend a little bit. You have to spend some to gain some."

He added that having programs that aren't focused just on dentistry is helpful, and dental societies shouldn't be afraid to take a chance.

In addition to these programs, the Stark County Dental Society created a dues program for the Mercy GPR. Through this program, the SCDS pays for the graduate dues for Mercy GPR Residents and has had a 100 percent participation rate for the 2016-17 residency class resulting in 10 members.

Ragu wanted to thank Stark County Dental Society Program Chair Dr. Shelly Boss, Membership Services Chair Dr. Steven Smith, the 2016 Executive Committee, Executive Director Laura DeForest, and Dr. Ben Cook who serves on the ODA Council on Membership Services for their efforts in making the events possible.

Ragu said the dental society plans to continue holding innovative events in the future.

"With all of the dental societies throughout Ohio working to plan membership events, together we will make a big difference," he said.



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