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## 2010 Sunstar/RDH Award of Distinction recipients announced

Sunstar Americas and *RDH* magazine proudly announce the recipients of the 2010 Sunstar/RDH Award of Distinction. This year's recipients are:

- Nancy Alleman of Steilacoom, Washington
- Susan P. Burzynski of Tonawanda, New York
- Sheree Duff of Auburn Hills, Michigan
- Erika B. Feltham of Fallbrook, California
- Lauren Gueits of Northport, New York
- Sherri Lukes of Cobden, Illinois
- Debra Olsen of Los Angeles, California
- Michelle Noblet-Vacha of Colorado Springs, Colorado

The eight recipients were selected from among a variety of dental hygienists from the United States and Canada, and were judged by a panel of writers associated with *RDH* magazine. The 2010 recipients will be the focus of an article scheduled for the September 2010 issue of *RDH*. The recipients will be honored during a ceremony coordinated by Sunstar Americas at the RDH Under One Roof conference in Orlando, Fla., in August 2010.

The 2010 ceremony represents the ninth group of dental hygienists to be recognized by Sunstar Americas and *RDH* magazine. The two companies first collaborated on the award in 2002.

Kate Mills, a former recipient of the award, nominated Alleman for the award. Alleman was recognized for her work with low-income children in Washington State.

"Nancy has made a huge impact on how Washington hygienists perceive the needs in their communities and how they can make a difference," Mills said. "This has motivated more hygienists to consider community-based practice in schools, nursing homes, senior centers, and hospitals, and as a result, more underserved and ignored populations have received dental disease prevention services and needed restorative treatment."

Burzynski was recognized for her career accomplishments in private practice in the Buffalo, N.Y., area. In addition, her application described overcoming hearing impairment in both dental hygiene education and in her career.

"No provisions were afforded students with disabilities during my elementary, secondary, and hygiene school education," she said. "Therefore, trying to hear what was said in class, and taking proper notes was difficult. One of my elementary teachers told my mother I would amount to nothing because of my deafness."

Duff was recognized for her work in founding two dental hygiene programs and two dental assisting programs during her 30-year career.

"I have now had 15 graduating classes and I am so touched to be in touch with my graduates after all this time," Duff said. "I love them."

Feltham, a private-practice dental hygienist who was noted for her many hours of volunteering, received acclaim in California by advocating public awareness campaigns about the oral health effects of sour candy. At her prompting, the state's dental hygiene association issued a resolution stating that it "advocates the expansion of package labeling to include the adverse effects on hard tooth structures from candies with the pH levels of 5.5 and less."

Alice McEnaney, RDH, a New York dental hygienist, nominated Gueits, largely based on the latter's advocacy of patient education regarding systemic links to periodontal disease.

"Lauren Gueits has taken the initiative to raise the awareness of the oral/systemic link to the community as well as the medical/dental community," McEnaney wrote in her nomination. "Her philosophy is that the most efficient way to educate patients is to educate the educators. She has organized and facilitated lectures for dental professionals; round table discussions for endocrinologists, cardiologists, and internists."

Lukes submitted an application that detailed her early awareness of how migrant farm workers often have an acute need for dental care. She later became an instructor at a dental hygiene school and coordinated a clinical rotation through the local migrant worker health center.

"The more I learn about them the more I have been able, over several years time, to assist this population in living a healthier life," she said.

Noel Kelsch, RDHAP, a former recipient of the Sunstar/RDH Award of Distinction, nominated Olsen. Olsen is also a registered dental hygienist in alternative practice (RDHAP), which is a California-based career option that allows dental hygienists a greater scope of practice.

"Serving people who are really in need of care and haven't had access to care is my greatest pleasure," Olsen said. "How my business has grown so fast is beyond me. My patients vary from the homebound to developmentally disabled, seniors in assisted living and skilled nursing. I have a wonderful variety of patients I serve as well as places I visit. It is the most awesome and rewarding job I could have ever imagined."

Noblet-Vacha developed a nonprofit organization called Senior Mobile Dental, which "redirects available resources from traditional dental settings into a more accessible program directly addressing the issues seniors face."

She added, "One of the social barriers we are correcting is the assumption that our elders have dentures. We have renewed the vitality of local facilities and organizations by showing the need and success of interdisciplinary care. By creating this mobile dental hygiene program to bring direct access to care, we have re-imagined ways to navigate around the social obstacles to better health."

The eight recipients of the 2010 Sunstar/RDH Award of Distinction will be honored in a ceremony at 8 a.m. Friday, Aug. 6, 2010, at the Dolphin Resort in Walt Disney World. A reception in their honor will also be hosted at the hotel, starting at 4:30 p.m. on Aug. 6.

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