

## Do Something. Be a Leader.

Rebecca Wilder, RDH, BS, MS

What does leadership mean to you?

I recently attended a meeting where the central theme was professional leadership. The very essence of the word can be scary to some. I have heard many professional dental hygienists say they do not have leadership qualities, they cannot stand up in front of a group of people and speak without almost passing out or they have too many things to deal with in their life to take on a leadership role. Maybe one day, they say, they will have time to be a leader and contribute to the profession. The reality is that, in most organizations, 20% of the members do most of the work and carry the load of the remaining 80%. What this means is that leadership in dental hygiene is carried out by 20% of the members. It seems to me that we have many untapped leaders out there.

At the same meeting on leadership, the presenter recited a poem that you may have heard before.

### **Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody**

*This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody*



*when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.*

- Author unknown

The poem made me think about our profession and how much we need leadership development. My philosophy is that everyone has some leadership potential. This does not mean that everyone will be a national leader, but it does mean that everybody/somebody/anybody can take on a role of importance and make a contribution. Personally, I did not start off being a leader - I was perfectly happy being a follower. Rarely is one born a leader. However, I was fortunate to have mentors who were good leaders and they showed me the way. I learned by observation. I started slow by volunteering under the direction of somebody else. The first time I stood before an audience of my peers to make a professional presentation I was petrified! But, I

learned and persevered and can now stand in front of a room full of people and talk about dental hygiene. You see, that is the thing about leadership. Through desire and perseverance, one can become a leader, but the skills need to be continuously honed and developed. One never really "arrives," which is what makes leadership development so dynamic and contagious.

What role could you take on as a leader in dental hygiene? It might mean being a leader in the local component of your dental hygiene association, or taking the lead with a community oral health event. What about teaching a group of caretakers the techniques for good oral hygiene that might touch the lives of patients in a nursing home? It may mean going into a school to talk about the importance of oral health or presenting a Power-Point presentation to a group of middle school students about the detrimental effects of tobacco use or use of drugs. Or perhaps you have a passion for the legislative process and want to get involved politically. You can take on a big role or an ever so small role - it doesn't matter. What matters is that you take on a role.

Our profession needs Everybody, Somebody, Anybody to be involved, support the profession of dental hygiene and make a difference. Do Something. Be a Leader!

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Wilder, RDH, BS, MS  
Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Dental Hygiene