

# modern hygienist

February 2007

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LOST HOURS  
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# Excellence

From more than 500 applicants from around the country, these five women stood apart as some of the best of the best. As finalists for the BreathRx Hygienist of the Year Award, they were treated to a lavish three-day stay in Beverly Hills. For details on their stay and the selection process, see **p. 32**. And of course, you'll want to get to know our winner—Lisa Higbee, RDH, BS (**p. 38**). Once you're sufficiently inspired by their stories, find out how you can improve your own career through technology (**p. 40 + 46**), proper protocol (**p.50**) and better business acumen (**p.44**).



**WELCOME TO BEVERLY HILLS.** On the far left, from top to bottom shots of Cathy, Stephanie M., Lisa, Dorris and Stephanie P. as they arrived at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel and made their way up to their suites. On the immediate left, the five ladies get glamorous and stroll down Rodeo Drive on their way to dinner at Spago.

While this may seem like a dream sequence, the fantasy actually became a reality for the five lucky finalists of the first BreathRX Hygienist of the Year Award, sponsored by Discus Dental. These everyday dental hygienists were whisked away to glamorous Beverly Hills for three days of pampering, interviews and mounting anticipation.

### A COMMUNITY WORTH HONORING

The idea for the award was developed during a group brainstorm at Discus Dental. "Our CEO, Robert Hayman, was the one who actually built upon the idea of acknowledging the best in the hygiene community and creating the competition as it now stands," explains Craig Rexroad, director of public relations for Discus. "The criteria was developed in conjunction through several industry leaders, but was spearheaded by Kristi Messing Bernie, RDH, BS. Discus Dental and BreathRx believe that dental hygienists are unsung heroes of oral care and people don't always realize the dramatic and effective part hygienists play in our overall health. We wanted to find a way to recognize the best of the best and then make them known and help spread their message nationwide."

The final criteria for the award required applicants to have practiced for at least five years, complete an official registration form including a short essay on why they should be the Hygienist of the Year, and submit their curriculum vitae, two patient evaluation forms, two colleague evaluation forms, and a care plan for recare visits and initial periodontal therapy. Discus Dental received applications from more than 500 dental hygienists from all over the United States.

The people tasked with the difficult job of narrowing down the group included Katie Dawson, RDH, BS, former president of the American Den-

tal Hygienists' Association (ADHA); Maria Perno Goldie, RDH, MS, also a former ADHA president and editor-in-chief of *Modern Hygienist*; Brendan McLoughlin, Discus' vice president and general manager of pharmaceutical and consumer products; Mark Gasp, director of consumer sales and marketing for Discus; and Brian Mencer, the head creative director at Quantum, the ad agency for the BreathRX brand.

With so many qualified candidates it wasn't easy, but the five judges eventually narrowed the field to five.

### THE FEW, THE PROUD, THE FINALISTS

In meeting the five finalists—Lisa Higbee, RDH, BS; Stephanie Pietrantoni, RDH; Stephanie Maddox, RDH; Donna Grzegorek, RDH; and Cathy Anderson, CDA, RDH, BS—you engage five completely different personalities. They come from various backgrounds and each has her own unique style, backgrounds, interests and goals. Yet, when you begin to discuss the dental hygiene profession or patient care, there is an undeniable sense that these women are kindred spirits. Each possesses remarkable clinical skill and have made strides to learn more by committing to hundreds of hours of continuing education. They all exude the compassion that comes with being a top-notch health care provider, and—after years of chairside chats and negotiations—know just how to put patients at ease.

All extremely qualified, any of the finalists would have made an excellent representative of the dental hygiene community. But, only one could be the Hygienist of the Year.

### YOU'RE ON

There were three formal components on which the women were scored: the introductory dinner, screen test and media interview.



# living the dream

Celebrity treatment for five women who are truly stars of the dental hygiene profession. by Thais Carter

photography by Bob Torrez

Greeted at the airport by your own personal hostess, riding through the streets of Beverly Hills, Calif. in a limousine, pulling up in front of the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel, stepping out to be greeted with flowers, champagne and a photographer, it is hard not to notice that all of a sudden all eyes are on you. Who is that woman? Is she a celebrity? What makes her so special?

And as all the people around you question one another, you question yourself: How did I get here?

**DINNER DATES.** After arriving at various times throughout the day, the finalists prepared for their introductory dinner. Held in the GM Penthouse on the eighth floor of the Beverly Wilshire—formerly a residence to actor Warren Beatty for more than 10 years—the dinner was progressive; each of the five judges oversaw a table comprised of representatives from Discus, *Modern Hygienist*, Quantum and the ADHA, with four or five to a table. In order for all parties to engage all finalists, each dinner course represented a 20-minute interview.

"It was the most intimidating part of my week," admits Ms. Pietrantonio. "Everyone was so nice and had great questions, but eating salad or greens in front of four other people staring at you and hanging on your every word is torture for a dental hygienist. The whole time I was thinking, 'Do I have something in my teeth?'"

**ACTION!** As intimidating as that first dinner may have been, the screen test the next day caused even more nerves. "The screen test helps us to see who can hold up under the high pressure of TV commercial production," explains Jackie Budd, SVP, management supervisor at Quantum. "A TV stage has so many people, the camera, the lights, the microphone, the cue cards, and a director telling you what to do and say. It's an incredibly difficult environment to remain natural, yet step outside of yourself to perform."

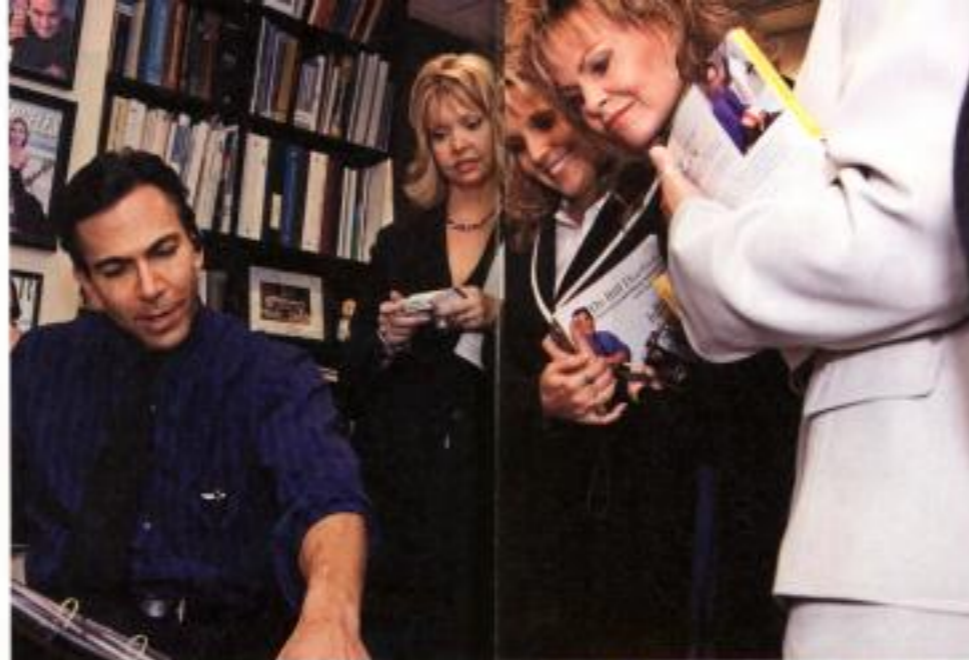
Completely transformed from the lavish dinner the night before, one of the rooms in the penthouse had black plastic sheets hanging over the windows, a large gray backdrop in the corner, and several big, hot lights shining directly into the center of it all.

But before the women were thrown onto the hot seat—complete with a boom mike just above their heads and a director's marker in their faces—they were treated to professional hair and makeup, courtesy of Christine Nguyen, a makeup artist who has worked on celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, Kate Hudson and Lucy Liu.

"It felt very glamorous to have someone fuss

**ONE NEW EXPERIENCE AFTER ANOTHER**

On the right, the finalists look on as Dr. Bill Darfman shows them before and after pictures of cosmetic treatments he's provided. Directly below (from left to right), Donna listens intently at the progressive dinner. Lisa gets comfortable in the media interview. Stephanie P gets her makeup done. Cathy takes direction for the next part of her screen test, and Stephanie M. poses for a quick pic with Brendan McLoughlin, Discus' VP and GM of pharmaceutical and consumer products. And at the very bottom, the five dental hygienists pose on the rooftop terrace of the penthouse to take a picture with their personal hostesses from Discus and their makeup artist. Clockwise starting from the top left: Christine Nguyen, makeup; Cathy, Donna, Lisa, Stephanie P, Stephanie M., Anelise, Caroline, Heidi, Sunni Sugimoto, Lauren Quinn, Allison Zimmerman, and Henna Shezok, hostesses and Discus employees.



over me," says Ms. Maddox.

With the pampering complete, the finalists were ushered in—staggered by an hour so that no one would be present for the other's test—and directed to read several "15-second spots" from cue cards highlighting BreathRX products. It may sound like a walk in the park, but with the bright lights and shadows of people in suits whispering and typing in the background, this exercise had the ladies sweating just a bit.

"I consider myself a poised and self-confident person who can deliver an effective dental message to one person or 1,000 people without hesitation," explains Ms. Grzegorek, "so I was surprised to experience so much difficulty in reading a few sentences in front of one seemingly innocent camera."

"I am so used to, as a hygienist, controlling my environment and being at the top of my game," says Ms. Maddox, "that this was very disconcerting. I was never quite sure that I nailed it."

Eventually though, the women loosened up in front of the camera. "Each contestant exceeded our expectations," says Ms. Budd. "Their passion for the profession was the key to the excellent performances they gave in front of the camera. Choosing a 'winner' was nearly impossible."

**MEDIA MAVENS.** Immediately following their screen test, each of the finalists was brought to a separate room in the penthouse for media interviews with the staff of *Modern Hygienist*, including Ms. Goldie, as well as the editorial director, publisher, an associate edi-

tor and a member of the sales team. The group took turns asking questions ranging from the technical perspective of a colleague—explain the evidence behind the various decisions you made in the treatment plan you submitted—to the clueless questions of a consumer—If my gums bleed, will I have a heart attack?

The interviews were meant to prepare the potential winner for the potpourri of potential questions she may be asked in the variety of audiences she will encounter as Hygienist of the Year.

"The panel asked great questions," says Ms. Pietrantonio, "and it was great to have an

opportunity to sit back and think about the methods behind my hygiene madness."

"The media interview was a great exercise in diplomacy, steadfastness and focus while under pressure," adds Ms. Grzegorek. "It reminded me of some of the moments in my day-to-day hygiene world."

No five women could be more comfortable talking about why they love their profession. Each one rose to the challenge. "I'm glad I wasn't a judge," admits Steven Diogo, editorial director for *Modern Hygienist* and Advanstar Dental Media. "During our interviews, each of the



hygienists impressed me with her depth and breadth of knowledge, as well as her insight and passion about what it means to be a dental hygienist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We posed some challenging questions and never found these professionals unprepared to state and defend their positions."

**FINDING TIME FOR FUN**

Of course, when in Beverly Hills it would be cruel to have all work and no play, so the hostesses assigned to the finalists made sure that there were plenty of fun distractions.

As soon as each of the finalists walked into her suite, she was greeted by a very large gift basket with a BreathRx backpack with the full-line of BreathRx products, DayWhite Take-

home whitening product, Kiehl's spa gift set, Henry Bendell's scented candle, a signed copy of Dr. Phil's book and Oprah's favorite collection, a Sprinkles Cupcake found only in Beverly Hills. And after those, it was just one treat after another. ...

"I had the most wonderful spa visit imaginable," Ms. Higbee gushes. "I was really hyped up, and the massage is exactly what I needed. I felt completely pampered."

Ms. Pietrantonio and her hostess, Caroline, made their way to the Dr. Phil show. "It was an awesome experience," she says. "It was great fun and a great buffer for my nerves."

Ms. Anderson, Ms. Grzegorek and Ms. Maddox were all treated to lunch at The Ivy. "It was nice to be part of the 'Ladies Who Lunch,'" says Ms. Maddox. "It was so interesting to see just how many people are lunching and shopping in the middle of the day when the rest of us are usually working."

A couple of the ladies were even treated to a Rolls Royce ride down Rodeo Drive. "Steve—the event coordinator—told the driver I was one of his VIP guests," explains Ms. Grzegorek, "and I almost fainted. I climbed in the Rolls Royce in disbelief and took a spin. I felt like I was living the life of the rich and famous."

**PICTURE PERFECT.** Of course, what would Beverly Hills be without paparazzi, or, in this case, paparazzo Bob Torrez. A photographer based in L.A., Mr. Torrez was able to spend almost all day with the finalists, capturing everything from their limo arrival to first introductions, hair and makeup, and emotion during the screen tests and interviews.

Despite the pressure of being "camera ready" at all times, the women eventually grew comfortable with having Mr. Torrez as a constant shadow. "At first, I was a little nervous about being photographed," admits Ms. Higbee, "but I just went with it. At the end of the trip I had to take a Motrin because my jaw was so tired,"

**WINING AND DINING.** On Thursday night, all of the finalists were treated to a lavish dinner at Spago, Wolfgang Puck's signature restaurant. Dining outside on the patio, underneath olive trees lit with white, twinkly lights, it was a veritable wonderland of delicious smells, tastes and conversation. The menu included a smoked salmon and caviar pizza, wild mushroom risotto, fall apple and endive salad, butternut squash and mascarpone ravioli, pan-roasted chicken or grilled "Cote de Boeuf" as a main dish, and profiteroles with "50 beans" vanilla ice cream, glazed with a decadent chocolate sauce and spun sugar.

Echoing the comments of all the women, Ms. Higbee insists that, "the dinner at Spago was second to none and it was wonderful to have the chance to interact with everyone, relax and just enjoy the company."

**THE DOCTOR IS IN.** As their last L.A. adventure, the women took a limo ride to the office of Dr. Bill Dorfman, founder of Discus Dental, one of the country's leading dentists, and the man behind many of the million dollar smiles created on ABC's "Extreme Makeover."

Guested warmly by his long-time office manager, Jill, the finalists were given a tour of the Century City Aesthetic Dentistry facility, including the specially constructed operatory where scenes for "Extreme Makeover" and Discus Dental training videos are shot. And then, of course, came a personal audience with Dr. Dorfman.

"I was amazed at the amount of time Dr. Bill personally spent with us," says Ms. Grzegorek. "He openly shared clinical ideas and protocols with us." And as the ladies stood in awe of the many magazine covers and celebrity auto-

**A GOOD-LOOKING GROUP:** Prior to the introductory dinner, the finalists stop to take a photo with Discus Hygiene editor-in-chief, Maria Perry Gault, RDH, MS, Discus Dental's VP of Human Resources, Steve Anderson, and Brendan McLoughlin, Discus' VP and GM of pharmaceutical and consumer products.



graphs that adorned the walls of Dr. Dorfman's office, he took the time to sign copies of his new book, *500 Dollar Smile: A Complete Guide to Your Extreme Smile Makeover*, for each finalist, as well as copies of the CD he recorded with fellow members of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry band, the MATRIX Band.

"Visiting Dr. Dorfman's office was the icing

on the cake," says Ms. Higbee. "I've always admired him and his kindness, and it was really neat to see him and his staff in action."

**AND THE WINNER IS...**

After all the nerves and all the fun, the ladies piled into the limo once more and headed towards Discus Dental headquarters in Culver City, Calif. There, they were treated to another elegant lunch, as well as a slideshow recapping the excitement and activities of the past three days.

There were tears, and many kind words from Mr. McLoughlin about the profession and the finalists, but then it was time to reveal the winner. In front of a room full of Discus employees the hygienists stood together, holding hands as the envelope opened and Mr. McLoughlin announced that the first-ever BreathRX Hygienist of the Year was Lisa Higbee.

The women hugged and Ms. Higbee cried, amazed that she had won. She was given flowers and a beautiful crystal trophy engraved with her name and new title. Through her tears, she thanked everyone in the room and then proceeded to make everyone laugh with a quick "superstar" lunge.

And then suddenly she was in a chair getting her hair and makeup done one more time, for the last photo shoot, still in disbelief as she called her husband, best friend, and tried to reach her office in Pocatello, Idaho.

"I couldn't believe it," she admits. "I don't even know what was going through my head, but now I feel like a million bucks. I'm just so excited and so flattered. My patients will be so happy."

In addition to the honor of being Hygienist of the Year, Ms. Higbee receives a \$5,000 cash prize, an appearance in a BreathRX commercial/ad and complimentary admission to Discus' 2007 Las Vegas Extravaganza.

"It's weird to be honored for doing something you love so much," she says with a laugh. "It's kind of like getting presents on Mother's Day."

*The Finalists*

Here is a quick look at our five finalists. If you're dying to know more about them, don't worry—in the coming year we'll be profiling each of them as mentors.

*Cathy Anderson, CDA, RDH, BS*  
COLLINGSVILLE, IL

- \* Adjunct Faculty, Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene Programs at Lewis and Clark Community College
- \* Dental Hygienist and Coordinator for Internal & External Marketing at the practice of Robert Steppler, DDS

*Donna Grzegorek, RDH*  
ALGONQUIN, IL

- \* Dental Hygienist, Hygiene Coordinator at the practice of Gregory Terle, DDS
- \* Hygiene Coordinator, COO of Innovative Dental Professionals, John R. Napolitano, DDS
- \* Hygiene Educator / Speaker for OraPharma and Zila Pharmaceuticals
- \* Dental Consultant

*Lisa Higbee, RDH, BS*  
POCATELLO, ID

- \* Dental Hygienist at Cedar Hills Family Dentistry, D. Michael Sutton, DDS
- \* Idaho Delegate to the ADHA

*Stephanie Maddox, RDH*  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

- \* Dental Hygienist at the practice of Steven Holbrook, DMD

*Stephanie Pietrantonio, RDH*  
ELGIN, IL

- \* Dental Hygienist at A Smile for Life Dental, Dean W. Locking, DDS
- \* Highest Producing Hygienist in the Country, 2006
- \* Lecturer & Consultant