Dear Alumni, Colleagues, and Friends,

Let this be the only Orthodontic Alumni Association of Illinois Newsletter that ever mentions COVID-19! Overnight, this powerful adversary has changed us, but it also has informed and connected us.

Pre-pandemic, for 30 years I followed a strategy that our office should “make no more than one change per year.” It was my belief that in professional consistency, our specialty learns, improves, and gives comfort. But in the blink of an eye, we had to change everything. Everything. We are working harder to see fewer patients per day. Staying on the same page with patients is now more challenging. As one of my best friends and ortho classmates said, “I have never worked so hard to make so little money.”

And yet, despite our end-of-day exhaustion from extra managerial issues, greater inefficiencies, and talking through an N95, we are rendering good orthodontic care. I’m grateful for what my staff has accomplished. I think the ship that we have built to cope with “asymptomatic-yet-infectious” is seaworthy. But now, the seas are getting choppy. We are now all hands-on deck—again.

Let us not get so lost in the now that we forget that our ships could not have been built if we did not share—not just practical information, but also our fears and ignorance. Let us not forget our fellow Illinois alumni were instrumental in the modification of unrealistically restrictive governmental guidelines. And let us not get so lost in the extra exertion that we leave behind our newly graduated sisters and brothers.

Much of our Alumni Association effort is a focus on providing financial assistance, mentoring, and possible job opportunities for the residents. But there are some pretty powerful forces keeping our almost 100 year-old organization seemingly “less-than-relevant” in our lives. I remember what it was like to literally crave freedom from mentoring, oversight, evaluation, and judgement. And frankly, we all practice uniquely, which is really quite difficult for any of us to embrace. This makes it easy to place alumni connections on the back burner.

But they are relevant. In the spirit of how the pandemic has reminded us that we cannot and should not be isolated, I will speak for all of us. Easy and palatable is the advice from Facebook group, consultants, CE gurus, and billion-dollar supply companies. Orthodontist-to-orthodontist interactions may be emotionally trickier, but that is how it is in families. We’re all in this together and it’s time to become connected!

Dr. Ken Kaplin (UIC ’90)
Dear Alumni and Friends,

Despite COVID-19, our department did a phenomenal job to further science and scholarly work.

In the past academic year, we obtained three American Association of Orthodontists Foundation (AAOF) awards, conferred to Drs. Phimon Atsawasuwan, Maysaa Oubaidin, and Laurie Susarchick. Congratulations to these scholars! Dr. Oubaidin joined us as a full-time faculty member in July 2020.

Dr. Samim Taraji (second-year resident) was selected by the AAOF to serve as Resident Director. I continue to serve on the AAOF Rapid Assessment of Evidence Panel and AAOF Planning and Awards Review Committee (PARC).

UIC Orthodontics is developing the Specialty Node and Cleft Lip/Palate Node of the National Dental Practice Based Research Network, which is funded by NIH/NIDCR.

In this past academic year, our department published 36 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals and had 35 presentations at regional/national/international scientific meetings. Our faculty continue to have a regional and national presence in organized dentistry activities.

Dr. Jessica Begley (first-year resident) won the 2020 UIC College of Dentistry/ADA Health Literacy in Dentistry Essay Contest Award in the post-doctoral student category.

Dr. Therese S. Galang-Boquiren, Associate professor, was elected a Fellow of the International College of Dentists.

Thanks to a generous gift from Graber family, the department will hold an annual "Gramer Seminar Series" starting in September 2021. Speakers with national and international reputations will be invited to give lectures/talks at this annual event.

Welcome to our Class of 2024!

1. Evan Booth (University of Michigan)
2. Shirley Zhang (University of Pennsylvania)
3. Mathew Aaron Rhe (UIC)
4. Emelia Marie Karkazis (Marquette University)
5. Analia Tahir (Western University of Health Sciences)
6. Zachary Thor Skaland (Ohio State University)
7. Stephen T. Treacy (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
8. Hsuan Rebecca Tsuei (UCLA)

I am very thankful to our alumni for their continued support of UIC Orthodontics. None of the achievements would be possible without the generous support of our alumni.

Sincerely,
Sath Allareddy