



ODA's Past Presidents: The Fab Four

By Tina Evans, ODA Director of Communications and Education

Since its founding in 1907 the Oklahoma Dental Association has been led by 111 presidents, only four of whom have been women. It was 100 years before the first female president was elected. Notably, this occurred during the ODA's centennial year (2006-07) when Dr. Pamela Low "broke the glass ceiling" and was chosen to lead the Association. Since Low's election, three other women have been elected to the ODA's top office: Drs. Krista Jones, Jandra (Mayer-Ward) Korb, and Tamara Berg.



Dr. Pamela Low
2006-2007



Dr. Krista Jones
2007-2008



Dr. Jandra Mayer-Ward
2008-2009



Dr. Tamara Berg
2010-2011



Dr. Shannon Griffin
2018-2019

"It was very exciting being the first female president of the ODA," said Low. "There were so many great moments during my tenure. One of my favorite memories was the unveiling of the bronze statue of Pierre Fauchard created by Dr. Gary Gardner that graces the front of our ODA building. It was an honor to have the international president of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, Dr. William Winspear, attend the ceremony."

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One of Dr. Krista Jones' passions is serving the marginalized people around the world.



During freshman orientation, a professor suggested that students purchase football tickets as a group. "None of the guys volunteered to collect the IDs and money and purchase the tickets in a block, so I did," said Low. "The next week, I was nominated and elected president of the freshman class; that began my involvement with organized dentistry."

When Low and her husband, Dr. Karey Low, opened their dental practices in Tulsa, they joined the Tulsa County Dental Society. Shortly after, she was asked to serve as a district delegate to the ODA House of Delegates. She attributes her early involvement in state-level organized dentistry to many Tulsa dental legends: Drs. Steve Hogg, Al Keenan, Stephen Glenn, Richard Haight, Jim

Torchia and Jim Saddoris. "Drs. Hogg and Keenan asked me to serve as secretary during their terms as ODA President. That led to a desire to serve on the state level as president," said Low. "I felt I had organizational skills that would be useful, and that it was the responsibility of members in any organization to participate and serve where they could contribute."

Krista Jones, who practices in Edmond and succeeded Low as ODA President, regarded her breaking into the inner circle



Dr. Tamara Berg with her husband and two sons at an OKC Thunder game.



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of leadership difficult because it felt like a closed, male-dominated group. “At first, because of age and gender, I felt I had to work harder to be taken seriously. I had to do my job or assignments very well and maybe even go above and beyond,” she said. “Sometimes it felt like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers - Fred received all the accolades for his remarkable dancing, yet Ginger was doing the same thing backwards and in high heels!”

Jones credits Drs. Scott Waugh and Frank Miranda as being instrumental in connecting her into areas she felt passionate about, which in turn exposed her to other areas of interest. “I was interested



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in becoming active in my professional organization and making a difference in my community, my state and my career,” said Jones. “I started with National Children’s Dental Health Month activities with the Oklahoma County Dental Society and the fair, and then moved to the State NCDH program and other philanthropic activities.”

Dr. Korb credits her father, Dr. Stephen Mayer, for her dedication to organized dentistry. “Being raised in a dental family, I understand the importance of organized dentistry,” she said. “I attended the ODA Annual Meeting even before I began dental school.” Her father’s lifelong friendship with Dr. Jim Torchia also influenced her to pursue leadership positions. “Straight out of dental school, I started a practice in Vinita and became president of the Northern

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District Dental Society and jumped in with both feet at the state level.”

Dr. Berg, who practices in Yukon, recounted how she immediately became involved with local organized dentistry societies. “I saw that organizations could work together to be a mentoring source for me as well as allow me to mentor future graduates,” said Berg. Before becoming ODA President in 2010-11, she was president of the Oklahoma Association of Women Dentists (OAWD) in 1998-1999 and again in 2006-2007, and president of the Oklahoma County Dental Society in 2003-2005. “After serving in these roles, I had the confidence to believe I could serve



Dr. Tamara Berg with her husband and two sons at an OKC Thunder game.

at the ODA level.”

A common thread with all four of these past presidents was their early involvement in organized dentistry either in dental school or as a new graduate, and recognizing the great advantage of mentorships. To new female graduates Berg advises, “Get involved in your dental community wherever you practice. Find a female dentist that you can call on for questions.” Korb offers a different perspective to new graduates: “I wish someone would have told me how important a solid disability policy would be to me and my family. It’s imperative for young dentists to fully fund their policy before they fund another thing: everything from waiver of premium to cost of living increase coverage.”

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Despite their strong involvement with their profession, all four also make time for their families and hobbies.



Dr. Tamara Berg with her husband and two sons at an OKC Thunder game.

for their families and hobbies. Jones and her husband, Craig Stinson, are avid world travelers. “We are Total Eclipse of the Sun chasers,” she says proudly. “We’ve now seen ten eclipses all over the world -- Peru, Zimbabwe, Turkey, Libya, Tahiti, Easter Island, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Southern Caribbean, and now DeBois, WY. We also love OU sports – particularly football and men’s and women’s basketball. And we’re huge Thunder fans. Russell Westbrook is our hero!”



Dr. Tamara Berg with her husband and two sons at an OKC Thunder game.

Korb says, “My family is my hobby. Or, I should say my hobbies have developed from my family.” The hobby that she spends the most time on is photography. She takes between 1000-2000 photos a week of various sports activities and school events and shares them with students at no cost. She also volunteers a significant amount of time to Vinita Public Schools in many areas including serving as the VPS Board of Education President. (“This is my sixth year on the board.”) She also attends several

concerts a year with her husband and/or children. “I’ve seen everyone from Kenny Rogers to the Dave Matthews Band to Snoop Dogg to Metallica!”

Berg has two sons who are both very active in sports so she spends a lot of time attending basketball games and swim meets. She and her family are also big OU and OKC Thunder fans and enjoy going to games. During her free time she enjoys scrapbooking and reading.

The Lows have always had an active lifestyle and enjoy being outdoors. In Oklahoma, they enjoy sailing, windsurfing and bicycling. “Now that we spend most of

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our retirement time in Colorado we’re able to ski every day in the winter,” she said. “I enjoy playing the piano, but I find it difficult to stay inside long enough to play! As John Muir said, The mountains are calling and I must go.”

The ODA will add a fifth female president to



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its ranks when Dr. Shannon Griffin assumes the presidency in 2018-2019. Griffin is a general dentist practicing in Edmond and the mother of two sons. She is also a faculty member in the OU College of Dentistry’s AEGD program and served as the Chair of the 2016 OkMOM in Oklahoma City. Noting how it is important to be involved in shaping the future of the profession, Griffin said, “It’s one thing to be a part



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of the profession and accept how it may change around you. But it’s another thing altogether to have a direct impact on how the profession changes around you.” Griffin believes that the profession of dentistry allows women to be anything they want to be. “Dentistry allows you to be a doctor, mother, philanthropist, choir director, or whatever!”