

CDAA Through the Eyes of a Rookie

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I was greatly encouraged by the President of the Pomona Valley Dental Assistants Society, Claudia Pohl, to attend the Education Day at the CDAA in Burbank on April 2, 2016, and then I was invited to attend the General Assembly meeting afterwards, as well as sit in on the post-board meeting the morning after. I started attending the Education Days through Pomona Valley Dental Assistants Society originally because, honestly, I got credit for attending from my dental assisting program. But after one time I was hooked, and I've been attending these the last nearly three years. These education days are goldmines for interesting lectures and a time to connect with fellow dental assistants. So, being asked by Claudia to attend Education Day at the CDAA (she's the CDAA President too!) was something I couldn't say no to. I was invited for the main purpose of being a fly on the wall, to see if taking a more active role would be something I wanted to do. I have been a Student Liaison for the last year, and perhaps she believed it was time to take the next step. It was quite an experience.

I arrived that Saturday morning in time to find the conference room, where Claudia and Katie Bell (also from PVDAS) had saved me a seat next to them. The first speaker was Dr. Allan Charles, a well-regarded periodontist from Pasadena, and his topic was "Implants: From Planning To Procedure." He was not only knowledgeable about the subject, but very excited about it as well. Dr. Charles was a very engaging speaker. He shared pictures, and at the end he showed a video, about 20 minutes in length, on the actual implant surgery. He stressed the importance of proper planning, the patient doing their homework on who is performing the implant, and what the process entails. What I respected him for were two main things: his deep appreciation for his dental assistants, and his presentation of the topic, speaking to us as true dental professionals, and not "just" assistants. He appreciates that the implant process takes a team, with dedicated participants.

The second speaker of the day was our very own Katie Bell, RDA. She gave a relevant presentation, "How To Prepare For The Job Interview". I truly enjoyed her presentation because as a younger person it was refreshing to hear and learn about the importance of the job search process from her perspective. Each point she discussed could be easily turned into a several hours' long presentations on their own, so editing it all down to one hour was quite the challenge, and very well accomplished. I searched for my job for six months, so I know personally how frustrating it can be. Katie was very encouraging to those people who had questions, reminding them to keep going, and to stay positive. After the Education Day portion was over we enjoyed lunch together in the Bistro area of the hotel. Everyone warmly welcomed me, which made me feel more comfortable. This whole experience was outside of my comfort zone and yet each person I met treated me like they had known me for years.

Following lunch, it was time for the CDAA General Assembly. All members of CDAA were encouraged to stay for this important meeting. The agenda was lengthy and yet Claudia and the executive board kept the meeting on point. There were awards given, recognition of Life Members and 1st Time Delegates, and reports were read. Prior to the meeting we were given note cards in order for us to write down any questions we had. A member of DAC (Dental Assisting Council) was present and Claudia had a conversation with her up front and asking some of the questions on the note cards. This could easily have turned into a heated discussion as there are several key issues relating to dental assistants and their relationship with the Dental Board. Instead, Claudia, the DAC representative, and all the delegates kept cool heads and all were very professional. After that there was the election of the new officers. These five women are choosing to take the needs of dental assistants very seriously by representing us with pride. I was very impressed with the whole process, and a bit overwhelmed too with all that I was learning.

At lunch I had sat with Katie and she told me that a surprise engagement shower was being thrown by the Board of Directors for Shari, the 1st Vice President. So after the General Assembly meeting was concluded, we stopped by our room (Katie and I were roomies) to regroup and then head to Shari's room. When we walked in, the ladies yelled "surprise!" to Katie. They had thrown *her* a surprise baby shower! How fun was that!! We shared some bubbly, played a few fun baby shower games led by Shari, and watched Katie open her gift. The givers had signed the gift-wrapping, what a keepsake itself! Then, the tables were turned and Shari was indeed surprised as she was given a beautiful gift of a necklace and a collection of note cards filled with words of encouragement from her dental family. There wasn't a dry eye in the room. Even though I had just met these ladies that day, it was very obvious of their true admiration for one another. After the party, the group decided to split in half for dinner, one group wanting Italian, the other Mexican. I went with the Mexican group and it was a relaxing time of eating and chatting. The hotel has a fire pit, where a group gathered after dinner. I sat and listened. They were sharing personal stories, not just work and CDAA stuff. These ladies truly like each other.

Sunday morning was the Post-Board Meeting. I felt honored to have been invited to attend this, as the agenda was filled with sensitive and important information. As I sat there, listening and watching the proceedings, I was hit with the amazement of what all it takes to keep this organization going. These people have dental assisting running in their blood. When it was time to gather a current roster of personal contact information of the members of the board, Katie looked at me, and I said, OK, I'd do it. I accepted the position of Director of PVDAS. I know I will have lots of help as a rookie in all this, so I am excited. On a personal note: Claudia Pohl was my program director at Citrus College. Not only does she do that for her "day job", she is also the President of the CDAA! I witnessed her in action, and the entire board was passionate about the profession as a whole. I am a late-bloomer in the dental world, but I am excited to be a new member of this family.