



South Dakota
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

Dentistry IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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SDDA Welcomes Kellie Yackley as Executive Director



The South Dakota Dental Association is pleased to welcome Kellie Yackley as its new Executive Director. With more than 20 years of experience in healthcare, philanthropy, strategic communications, and organizational leadership, Yackley brings a strong background in relationship building, advocacy, and community engagement to the association.

"Kellie brings a unique combination of leadership experience, strategic vision, and a deep commitment to building relationships," said Dr. Bryan Johnson, President-elect of the South Dakota Dental Association. "It became clear she understands the importance of serving members, strengthening partnerships, and positioning organizations for long-term success. We are excited to welcome her to the SDDA and look forward to working together to advance our mission and support dentists across South Dakota."

Yackley joins the SDDA following a successful career with Avera, where she served in leadership roles focused on philanthropy and community giving. Throughout her career, she has worked closely with healthcare leaders, physicians, donors, and communities across South Dakota, leading major fundraising initiatives, building strategic partnerships, and helping organizations turn vision into action.

A South Dakota State University graduate with a bachelor's degree in journalism, Yackley also earned a master's degree in administration with an emphasis in organizational leadership from the University of South Dakota. She is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) and is widely recognized for her ability to bring people together around a shared purpose.

"I'm incredibly honored to join the South Dakota Dental Association and build upon the strong foundation that has been created," Yackley said. "The SDDA has a remarkable legacy of serving its members, advocating for the profession, and advancing oral health across our state. I have tremendous respect for that history, and I'm excited to listen, learn, and work alongside our members and partners as we look toward the opportunities ahead."

For Yackley, the transition to SDDA represents both a continuation of her work in healthcare and an opportunity to serve a profession that plays a critical role in the overall health and well-being of South Dakotans.

"Healthcare has been at the center of much of my professional life, and I've seen firsthand the importance of strong professional communities, effective advocacy, and relationships built on trust," she said. "Dentistry is evolving, and that creates exciting opportunities for the SDDA to continue strengthening member value, engaging the next generation of dental professionals, and positioning the association for continued growth." *Continued on page 2*

Prevention Is Power: 7 Lifestyle Medicine Strategies for Career Sustainability

By Mary Wolf, MS, LPC-MH



Lifestyle Medicine has become one of my greatest passions, not only for my own health and wellbeing, but also for my counseling and coaching clients. As I work with dentists and team members, I see that many of the challenges of stress, fatigue, chronic health conditions, emotional exhaustion, and relationship struggles are influenced by the daily habits and choices that shape our lives. What excites me most about Lifestyle Medicine is that it focuses on what we can do proactively. Rather than waiting until we are burned out or dealing with significant health concerns, Lifestyle Medicine gives us practical, evidence-based tools to improve our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Small changes practiced consistently can create remarkable results over time. With my clients, I often focus on sleep quality and sleep routines first. With this

as a priority, the other pillars often get easier. Lifestyle Medicine is an evidence-based approach that focuses on daily habits that prevent disease, improve quality of life, and support long-term wellbeing.

Discover the seven pillars to reflect on your own health by scanning the QR code for full article.



Continued from page 1

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As she begins her tenure, one of Yackley's top priorities is connecting with members across the state to better understand their practices, communities, and the opportunities and challenges they face. "The strength of an association is ultimately its people," she said. "I'm looking forward to getting to know our members, understanding what matters most to them, and finding ways we can continue to be an organization they see as essential to their professional lives." Born and raised in central South Dakota, Yackley and her husband, Mike, make their home in Onida. They have four grown children, four grandchildren, and several beloved grand dogs. Outside of work, they enjoy spending summers on the Missouri River, traveling, attending local sporting events, and staying active in their communities.

Yackley has a long history of community involvement, including service on the boards of the Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce, Teammates of South Dakota, and the South Dakota Association of Fundraising Professionals. She also served as the South Dakota High School Rodeo Queen Contest Coordinator for ten years.

Yackley officially began her role as Executive Director on September 1, and the SDDA Board of Trustees and staff look forward to the leadership, energy, and vision she will bring to the association and its members.

Dental Workforce Solutions Grants Awarded

Two South Dakota technical colleges have received Dental Workforce Solutions Grants to strengthen the education and training of future dental professionals. Southeast Technical College and Western Dakota Technical College were each awarded \$46,000 to enhance their dental assisting and dental hygiene programs.



At Southeast Technical College, grant funding will support the purchase of intraoral scanners and a Dexter manikin, giving dental assisting students hands-on experience with technology commonly used in today's dental offices. The equipment will help students develop practical skills and better prepare them for the workforce.



Western Dakota Technical College will use its grant funds to purchase manikins, nitrous oxide units, instrument kits, and clinical board models for dental hygiene students. These resources will provide additional training opportunities and help students gain experience with equipment they are likely to encounter in practice. The South Dakota Dental Association established the Dental

Workforce Solutions Fund earlier this year to support and expand dental assisting and dental hygiene education programs across the state. The fund is supported through a four-year, \$100 annual assessment on practicing SDDA member dentists and is expected to generate approximately \$160,000. The South Dakota Dental Foundation will further enhance the program with an additional \$50,000. Grants awarded by SDDA are then matched dollar-for-dollar by the Delta Dental of South Dakota Foundation. Together, these investments provide approximately \$400,000 to support dental workforce training at South Dakota's technical colleges.

Lexus Paulson, RDH | Miss South Dakota USA 2026

For Lexus Paulson, a smile represents confidence, connection, and the way someone chooses to show up in the world. That belief has shaped her education, career in dentistry and ultimately led her to the Miss USA stage. A South Dakota native, Lexus attended The Ohio State University, where she earned her degree in Dental Hygiene. Her time as a clinical dental hygienist gave her a firsthand understanding of the impact oral health can have on a person's overall health, confidence, and quality of life. It also showed her the challenges that many patients face when it comes to accessing the care they need.

Lexus' mindset led her to being crowned Miss South Dakota USA 2026. She went on to represent South Dakota at the 75th Miss USA competition in Miami. The title of Miss South Dakota USA has never been separate from her career in dentistry. It has given her a larger platform to talk about access to oral healthcare.

Her mission as Miss South Dakota USA 2026 is to help expand access to dental care and oral health education across South Dakota, especially for children and families who face financial, geographic, or provider-related barriers to care. She believes access to oral healthcare should be the standard, not a privilege. During her year as Miss South Dakota USA, her message is simple; everyone deserves a smile they love. Whether she is working with a dental practice, volunteering in and around her community, or representing South Dakota on the national stage, she will use her voice and background in dentistry to make that belief a reality for more people across South Dakota.



Lexus' favorite part of dentistry has remained the same; helping people feel more confident in their smiles.

Continuing Education Calendar

The listing of these programs is provided as a service to SDDA Newsletter subscribers, and does not mean that these programs have been endorsed or approved by the SD Dental Association or the SD State Board of Dentistry. All members are cautioned to evaluate the programs on their own merit.

SOUTH DAKOTA DENTAL ASSOCIATION 2027 ANNUAL SESSION

May 13-15, 2027 | Sioux Falls, SD

Contact: Melissa Afdahl, 605-609-1152 | melissa@sddental.org | www.sddental.org

WESTERN DAKOTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Contact: 605-718-2410; email: corped@wdt.edu

Third Friday of the month (AM)

- American Heart Association CPR Class for Healthcare Professionals

Third Friday of the month (PM)

- American Heart Association CPR Recertification for Healthcare Provider

SOUTHEAST TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Contact: 605-367-4607 or corporateeducation@southeasttech.edu

Dental Radiology Course

- November 6-7, 2026
- March 5-6, 2027

LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Contact: Nicole Pahl, 605-882-5284, ext. 362; Nicole.Pahl@lakeareatech.edu

www.lakeareatech.edu/corporate-education/corporate-education-registration/

Home Study Radiology Courses available:

- Radiology Safety
- Radiography Production

CPR COURSES: Contact: Tia Meyer; 605-842-5672 or meyertia@hotmail.com

605CPR: We provide AHA and/or Red Cross BLS/ACLS/PALS certification. Will travel for onsite delivery. www.605CPR.com; jr@605CPR.com; 605-525-4CPR (4277)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Contact: Dept. of Dental Hygiene, 605-658-5960

Home Study Courses available:

- Radiology Interpretation, Pathology & Anomalies
- Errors of PA's, BWS & Panoramic Radiography
- Oral Effects of Head & Neck Radiation Therapy
- Radiation Safety
- Portable Dental Radiography
- SDF

ADA CE ONLINE

Contact: engage.ada.org

Classified Ads

Missouri River Dentistry in Fort Pierre, SD is looking for a full-time, caring, patient-focused, and energetic professional to join our high-tech dental office for the following positions: **Certified Dental Assistant; Registered Dental Assistant; and Dental Assistant.** Ideal candidates will be team-oriented, outgoing, and passionate about learning and patient care. Applicants should have excellent interpersonal skills and be interested in joining a completely computer-based, high-tech dental office with digital x-rays. Duties will vary based on training and certification. Tasks may include, but are not limited to: Greet patients and explain dental treatment to create rapport and comfort during appointments; Take and document vital signs and medical history for patient records; Sterilize, prep, and lay out equipment, instruments, supplies, etc. for exams and dental procedures; Provide patient education about oral health care, post operative care, and dental hygiene; Maintain a clean and organized work environment; Clean and disinfect patient operator rooms between appointments; Be aware of, adhere to, and maintain all dental office infection control policies and safety regulations by disinfecting and sterilizing equipment and instruments as necessary, as well as wearing masks, gloves and eyewear as necessary; Assist chairside during dental procedures; Complete patient chart notes for appointments during which employee assisted on; Other duties as assigned by Dr. Hofer. Missouri River Dentistry offers competitive wages and employee benefits. Wages range from \$16-\$28/hour depending on experience, education, certification and assigned duties. Wages include room for advancement based on continued training, education, and experience. Tuition/Student Loan Reimbursement and/or Sign-On Bonuses are available for the hired applicant(s). Benefits and incentives include, but are not limited to: Health Insurance; Dental Benefits; Paid Time Off; Paid Sick, Bereavement, and Jury Duty; Paid Holidays; Daily Team Bonus Incentive; Professional Development and CE Funding, IRA Matching. Scheduled Work Hours Are As Follows: Monday - Thursday 7:45 AM - 3:15 PM and Friday 7:45 AM - 2:15 PM. We are a team-oriented staff that cross-trains and work together to support each other and achieve success each day. If you believe you would be a good fit for our office, please submit a cover letter and resume in person, by email, or via fax.

Missouri River Dentistry; 304 Island Drive; Fort Pierre, SD 57532

Email: info@missouririverdentistry.com | Fax: (605) 223 - 9021 | Phone: (605) 223 - 2021

For more information, please feel free to contact us at any time via email or phone.

Dentistry in South Dakota
804 N Euclid; Ste 103
Pierre SD 57501

Classified Ads

Dakota Family Dentistry in Huron, SD is seeking a registered dental hygienist to join our team. The ideal candidate should be dedicated to providing excellent patient care with exceptional service. This is an outstanding opportunity to practice in a well-established clinic with a great team in a wonderful community. Benefits include a \$10,000 sign-on bonus, student loan repayment for 3 year commitment, competitive pay, 401K with profit-sharing, in-house dental benefit plan, paid sick leave, vacation, dues, licenses, CE, and 6 paid holidays. Visit our website: www.dakotafamilydentistry.org for an application or call 605-352-6999.

Dental Hygienist: Are you a dental hygienist looking to make a difference? Would you like to set your own schedule? Delta Dental of South Dakota's Mobile Program has collaborative supervision opportunities for dental hygienists. These opportunities include both—full time and part-time flexible schedules, including working specific weeks or months out of the year. The dental hygienists will work under collaborative supervision in South Dakota, primarily on the Pine Ridge or Cheyenne River Native American Reservations. The dental hygienists will join a team providing preventive services and oral health education in schools, Head Starts, etc. Extensive travel is required. May be eligible for benefits including health, dental, vision, life/long term disability insurance, paid holidays, vacation/sick leave, 401k, and more. For more information visit www.deltadentalsd.com. Submit a cover letter and resume to: summer.sporrer@deltadentalsd.com. Questions? Contact Zach Parsons at 605-494-2558.

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