

# Bonds & Bridges

a newsletter from UTSD Alumni Association, Spring 2024

## The UTSD Alumni Family Grows, Serves, and Thrives in 2024







## A Dental Legacy:

### *Dentistry is in Liz Hunsaker's Blood*

Every Friday afternoon during their school years Liz Hunsaker and her siblings would make the trip from their Bellaire home to their father's office next to the old Tidelands Motor Inn near the Texas Medical Center. They weren't going just to visit; they were there to work cleaning up the offices. Now, lest you think the elder Hunsaker was a tyrant (he certainly was not!), the young Hunsakers were well paid for their services with Friday night pizza or Mexican food dinners with Dad. Those visits and

the delicious meals that followed nourished more than the youngsters' bodies. They nourished their love of their father's job serving others as a dentist.

Dr. Jerry Hunsaker, Sr., a 1956 graduate of what was then known as the University of Texas Dental Branch, had built a thriving practice by the time his children were old enough for those treasured Friday evenings. He also built a family legacy.

Elizabeth (Liz) Hunsaker DDS traces her two life passions, her family and her profession, back to those early days.

While she says she always assumed she would marry and have a large family of her own, life took a different turn as she followed the ambition that drove her from third grade on. After graduating from Bellaire High School and attending the University of Houston, Liz enrolled in her father's alma mater and, as they say, the rest is history.



Proud Aunt Liz with her nephew, Chance, as he carries on the Hunsaker family tradition as a UTSD graduate Class of 2022.



The Hunsaker brothers all served their country. L-R: Horace (Bud) Hunsaker, Bid Hunsaker, David E. Hunsaker & Jerry (Jed) Hunsaker, Sr., Liz's dad. Three of the brothers graduated with DDS degrees from UTSD. Only Bid chose another path.

Today she has her own successful practice, not far from her dad's old office. The office decor reflects Liz Hunsaker's warmth and open personality, with seasonal touches enhancing the homelike atmosphere. She makes her patients feel like an extension of her own family. There will be no dental-phobia here.

Her brother Steve, also a UTSD graduate (Class of '89), is a partner in the practice. Laura Santo Salva DDS, a classmate of Liz's nephew Chance at UTSD, recently joined the practice becoming an honorary member of the Hunsaker extended family. Many of their patients have been trusting their dental health to the Hunsakers for decades.

Dentistry may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a family business but it often is. The Hunsaker family is a prime example. Liz had two uncles who were dentists, both also graduates of the UT Dental Branch.

Even her oldest brother, Jerry Hunsaker, Jr., who strayed from dentistry to become an ophthalmologist, married a dentist, Dr. Keely Riddle Hunsaker, and two of their five children are now embarking on the own dental careers. If that rings a bell, it might be because Chance and Joyce Hunsaker were featured in a story about sibling UTSD students in the



Winter 2022 edition of *Bonds and Bridges*. Chance is now in a residency program in South Carolina and Joyce is currently a third year dental student.

“We do things as a family,” says Liz Hunsaker with an obvious sense of pride. Those “things” include more than practicing dentistry. The Hunsakers love the outdoors, gardening, and spending relaxing family time at their retreat in Rockport. Liz, who sees everyone as family, provided safe harbor for many of her neighbors post-Hurricane Harvey when her Bellaire home remained high and dry during the flooding.

There is another tie that binds the family: the love of UTSD.

In 1985, the year a young Liz Hunsaker graduated, the Alumni Association began the Founders Fund, a new organization designed to provide scholarships for deserving students. Liz was just beginning her career with not much money in the bank and expenses waiting to set up a practice. But her father, always the wise mentor, encouraged her to scrape together \$5000 to join him in becoming one of the 100 founding members of the Founders Fund. She has never regretted it. Today, the Founders Fund has given over \$1 million in scholarships to UTSD students.



Liz and her brother Steve enjoy time away from the office fishing in Rockport.

Dr. Liz Hunsaker’s dedication to her school is legend. In addition to her work with the Founders Fund, she is the president of the UTSD Alumni Association, a former president of the Alumni Foundation, and a Legacy Member as well as being an active member of the Greater Houston Dental Society Foundation, another dental group that raises money for scholarships.

Liz is proud of her work as a family dentist. “It’s been hard at times, but always fun,” she says with a smile. And giving back to her UTSD family comes as naturally as breathing to Dr. Liz

Hunsaker. She has some exciting new ideas for helping more people in her community but she’s not ready to go public with those just yet.

In the meantime, she will continue to focus on giving back to her patients and her UTSD family. After all, she says, “It’s been good to the Hunsaker Family.”



It is all in the family for Dr. Liz Hunsaker, especially when she’s having fun at the 2023 Dinner with Friends celebration with her sister-in-law, Dr. Keely Riddle Hunsaker (center), niece Joyce, a third year student at UTSD (right) and UTSD grad Dr. Laura Santo Salva, the most recent addition to Liz’s practice.



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Tricia Fullerton, *Executive Director*

**2024 Events**

April 2024  
Senior Social  
CE Course  
*Dates and Places to be Announced*

May 10, 2024  
Graduation  
UTHealth School of Dentistry

May 16-18, 2024  
TDA Meeting in San Antonio  
Friday, May 17  
*UTSD Alumni Association and UTHealth School  
of Dentistry Alumni Reception*

July 26, 2024  
UTSD Alumni Luncheon  
Star of the South

September 20-21, 2024  
Texas AGD  
Friday, September 20  
*Texas Dentist of the Year and  
Texas New Dentist of the Year*

November 2024  
“Dinner with Friends”  
UTSD Alumni Association  
Distinguished Alumnus of the Year

January 2025  
White Coat Ceremony

**Contact your Alumni Association  
for Class Reunions in 2024.**



## Alumni Association Founders Fund Scholarships

The UTSD Alumni Association has launched a new 2024 Directory that will be published later this year. We are in Phase I gathering alumni data for this project. You will be receiving a postcard to confirm the information the Alumni Association has is accurate. If not, please update. Thanks for your help to insure this project is successful.

### In Memoriam

*Class of 1955*

Clarence "Ducky" Musslewhite

*Class of 1962*

Freddy R. Cessac

*Class of 1968*

Dallas Pierre

*Class of 1973*

Sandy Sanford

*Class of 1983 and 1992*

James "Randy" Mellard

*Class of 1991*

Barry J. Gomel



In 1985, 100 dentists committed \$5000 each to establish the UT Dental Branch Alumni Association Founders Fund. While the corpus of that \$500,000 has grown to more than \$1.5 million, it has also provided over \$1 million of support for the dental school. Dr. Les Fullerton presented this year's scholarship recipients, who are Bridget Bedore, Hakeem Bombata, Caitlyn Krebs, Deep Modi, Sherilynne Moore, Hedyeh Mosaffa, Celee Smith, and Colin Smith.

## Chew on This Fun Fact!



### A Very, Very Old Tooth

*An ancient shark tooth discovered near the Hawaiian coast is being hailed as an historic find. Located by scientists in the summer of 2022, it is recognized as the only megalodon tooth to be plucked from its original resting place, 10,000 feet deep in the Pacific seabed. The fossil, which still has its serrated edges, is speculated to be between 3.6 to 15 million years old.*



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