



2011

# International College of Dentists

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*“Recognizing Service and the Opportunity to Serve”*

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## ***IT SEEMS TO ME...a note from International President Charles Siroky***

Phoenix, Arizona, USA 10.1.11

### **GIVING BACK**

It seems that almost every day we are asked to donate to some cause. Many organizations aligned with a disease and most human service groups are asking for our money; ecological catastrophes and many charities recruit us as volunteers to help them address envelopes, send emails, knock on doors. We are so deluged with the crush of charitable appeals that many of us have become inured to them. It is impossible, even for the most wealthy, to make a donation to every praiseworthy cause. And yet all of us have the responsibility to help those less fortunate.

For the majority, there seems to be a never ending list of reasons not to contribute to any cause. Many communities, including the one in which I grew up, have their share of street people and beggars. I remember, as a child, my mother pulling me close to her if we passed by one of these poor souls. The accepted wisdom then, as it seems to be now, was that one should not give money to such people as it would only “encourage” them. After all, they said, they wouldn’t use the money for food. They would use it for booze; for drugs. Fortunately, not everyone felt this way. A few people reached into their purse or pocket and gave a coin or two.

There are a myriad of reasons one might use to excuse their parsimony. Some will say: “I am not a member of that religion, charity starts at home, they could find a job if they really wanted to, what did they ever do for me, they shouldn’t have had kids if they couldn’t afford them, I can’t give to everything...” The list of reasons could extend beyond the horizon.

Not too long ago I was sitting on a park bench during my ICD visit to Europe waiting for my wife who was at a kiosk purchasing a bottle of water. Almost directly across from me, a woman whom I took for a recent immigrant sat on the ground at the side of the path. She had an infant in her arms. Her head was covered and bowed. There was a small basket sitting on the ground in front of her obviously meant for the collection of alms. I was amazed by the number of

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### Mission Statement

The International College of Dentists is a leading honorary dental organization dedicated to the recognition of outstanding professional achievement and meritorious service and the continued progress of the profession of dentistry for the benefit of all humankind.

people who gave this woman something. I have no idea of the value of the coins they gave her. But, in addition to helping her with money, some of the people also spoke to her offering words of comfort. At one point a well-wisher actually waited until someone else had finished speaking to the woman before he himself tossed a couple of coins into her basket. For me, this was an “ah ha” moment. It served as confirmation to thoughts I have been having about our attitudes toward charity and philanthropy and how they relate to the International College of Dentists.

We all know people who are very generous and others who are miserly. I personally know a woman who is so devoted to homeless animals that she spends most of her disposable income for their benefit. She sometimes deprives herself of things many of us would consider essential to a normal life. I also know a dentist who will not donate anything to his community, church or humanity. He simply keeps it all for himself. Most people, of course, fall somewhere between these extremes. Most of us give to charities in a limited and often spontaneous way. As leaders in our communities, philanthropy should be a part of our annual budget and the amount we give should be thoughtfully considered at the beginning of each year.

Studies show that the correlation between charitable giving and happiness is actually greater than it is between charitable giving and wealth. There is obviously a causal relationship. But does happiness make one more prone to give, or does giving make one happy? I think it goes both ways. I have long advised young people to perform a random act of kindness or charity as a way of dealing with the blues. I know that helping others makes one feel good from personal experience.

People desire all kinds of things – money, power, friends, travel, fancy cars – because they think those things will bring them happiness. And perhaps they will. But the real bottom line is that what we all want in life is happiness. And one of the straightest, shortest, and surest routes to happiness is through giving of our time, talent and treasure.

Take a true look at your charitable giving over the last three years. What percentage of your disposable income does it represent? Are you comfortable with that number? Does it reflect what you could be giving back? If not, please consider increasing the amount of money you give to charity. And please do not forget your own International College of Dentists in your philanthropy. Many ICD Sections have their own charitable Foundations. Open up your heart and your purse. Many opportunities are available. There is much that needs to be done.

***THIS AND THAT...*** *This is to advise Fellows that the 2001-2010 Update to the ICD College History, as well as many other items of interest, is available on the College website - [www.icd.org](http://www.icd.org)*