

Darlene Diebold

Nominator: Michele Baak

Without hesitation or doubt, I nominate Darlene Diebold RDH, BSc. for the CDHA/Sensodyne Superhero Contest. Almost from the word go (when bill 171 was passed), Darlene founded Esteem Dental Hygiene, an Independent Mobile Dental Hygiene Service. In 2008, Darlene began that mobile dental hygiene service, catering to residents in long term care (LTC) facilities and to those who were unable to go out to a dental office either because of cost or other limitations. Darlene knew that proper oral hygiene care was a deficiency and an under serviced sector in the long-term care population, therefore her goal was to take leadership in setting up and pursuing this new opportunity. By doing so, she hoped to provide increased awareness of the profession and the role of what an Independent Dental Hygienist can offer. In addition, and importantly, to provide routine oral hygiene services to those in need. This service would aim to assist in the prevention of decay, manage gum disease and bone loss, educate others, and yet at the same time, offer her complete unselfishness, respect and understanding in helping the elderly and less fortunate. Her “Gift from The Heart” is not only seen just once a year but is provided every day at her LTC homes. Many of her residents are unable to take care of themselves because of several different medical conditions.... dementia, stroke, paralysis, mental deficiencies, arthritis to name a few and she’s able to customize each appointment accordingly. Entering each day, she is presented with the unknown, meaning the behaviour and health of each resident can alter and cause a change in her schedule as a result. Perhaps they’d just prefer to play bingo or take part in the scheduled sing-song for that day as opposed to having their teeth cleaned. Or perhaps the LTC home is on a respiratory or gastro outbreak and her services aren’t permitted until it’s over. Either way, her professionalism doesn’t falter, as she will make alternate arrangements to see them another time when they may be feeling better or are free. In the case of death, sympathy cards are sent to the families. Darlene assumes her role of social responsibility by helping the staff at each home become aware of not only her services, but the important link between a resident’s oral health and systemic issues. Darlene takes a ton of pride in her job and has helped educate the LTC staff how to provide oral care, specifically in cases where difficulty may present itself. Darlene is a welcome addition by all her LTC homes and has established a collaborative inter-professional relationship with other health care professionals involved. 10 years later, Darlene’s services have now expanded to approximately 16 LTC facilities

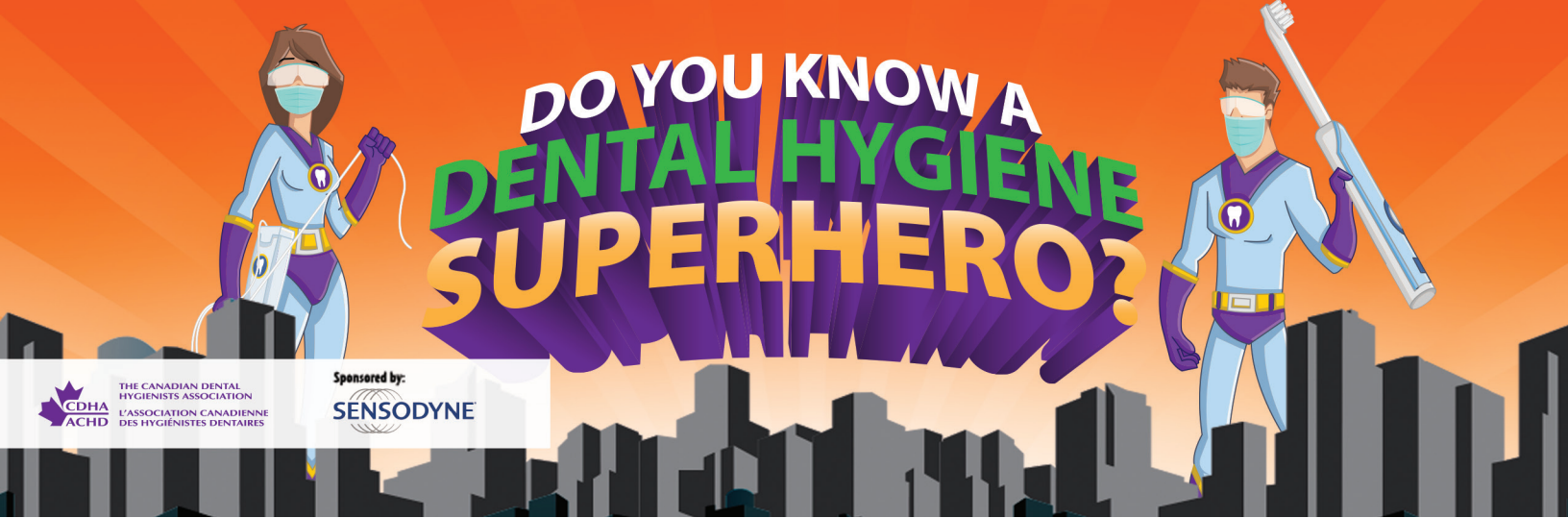


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ranging in distance from 20km - 100km from her home, and recently, an additional on-site location. In 2016, Darlene expanded her business to include a stationary office near her home. That's where I come in..... Darlene asked if I would work for her to help her business grow and to make our local communities and residents become more aware of the services that Independent Dental Hygienists could provide. I accepted and am blessed to have been given the opportunity. Due to the overwhelming need in the LTC homes, I am also assisting Darlene with her mobile business a couple of days a week. This is where I have seen firsthand Darlene's commitment, pride, and hard work which goes far beyond her 9-5pm shift. She is not only required to provide her own documentation and record keeping, but a separate follow up report is also provided to the LTC for each resident, and as well, each Power of Attorney. Then we must consider that each evening at home she has to re-stock her supplies, sterilize the instruments, file, and pull charts, confirm appointments all to prepare for the next day. She travels in a van and loads and unloads her equipment each day at each facility. Treatment is provided in a residents' wheelchair or in the residents' bed which presents us with a slight physical disadvantage, but the satisfaction of providing that care makes up for this. One of the biggest aspects of the job, is the relief and stress that is taken off the shoulders of the family members. Many families have commented that it's a wonderful service because it takes a lot of pressure off them knowing that their family member is being cared for. It eliminates the need for them to travel and take time off work to transport their loved one-off site. The families appreciate the honesty and openness from Darlene when updating them of the client's oral hygiene condition and behaviour. These updates will also include the fees involved (which are very reasonable), treatment recommendations, hygiene status, client behaviour and she'll cater to personal requests or individual meetings when making decisions for care. Communication with family is key in the LTC environment. Until you've seen it first hand, one cannot appreciate the hard work, pride, and dedication that Darlene puts into the profession of her Independent Dental Hygiene role. The opportunity that she has given me, has completely opened my eyes and another door, to explore another aspect in the world of Dental Hygiene. I am proud to be her colleague and to nominate her for this award. She truly deserves it! Thank you to CDHA and Sensodyne for this contest!



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