CDA Foundation Awards Dentist With Grant To Care for Underserved
Loan repayment grant helps dentists provide community dentistry

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Sacramento, Calif. — The California Dental Association Foundation recently awarded Matthew Mecheal, DDS, with its Student Loan Repayment Grant. In exchange for a commitment to practice in an underserved community, Dr. Mecheal will receive up to $105,000 over three years toward repayment of student loans.

A 2019 graduate of the Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, Mecheal provides dental care to the underserved at St. Jude Neighborhood Health Center in Orange County. Mecheal said his desire to work in public health stems from his upbringing, which instilled in him the importance of serving his community.

“I was raised to always help others and put them before myself,” said Mecheal. “I believe that this award will greatly advance my ability to give back and help those who truly need dental care.”

While attending dental school, Mecheal volunteered at clinics that provided care to the underserved. He also participated in a two-week service trip to Angola to provide care for people living in villages that lacked access to providers. The experiences helped confirm his career choice of working in public health.

“I believe that dentistry as a service gives providers an opportunity to serve those who face barriers to care,” said Mecheal. “This grant will allow me to follow my passion.”

The average educational debt for all indebted dental school graduates in the class of 2019 was $292,169, according to the American Dental Education Association. That high level of debt can jeopardize a new dentist’s ability to choose their preferred career path, according to the ADEA.

Mecheal is the 20th recipient of the Student Loan Repayment Grant. Since 2002, the program has enabled 19 dentists to pursue their desire to work in public health where they have helped nearly 100,000 patients and provided more than $25 million in care for individuals who face barriers to care. Nearly all recipients have remained in public health and the communities where they first served.

(more)
“The CDA Foundation’s mission is to improve the oral health of all Californians, and we know with the Student Loan Repayment Grant that Dr. Mecheal will help extend our reach to people in need,” said CDA Foundation Chair Ron Mead, DDS. “Our grant program allows dentists the opportunity to work in public health and provide quality health care to those people.”

Overall, the CDA Foundation’s grants and educational scholarship awards have enabled countless people to receive more than $111 million in care.

For more information, visit cdafoundation.org.

About the California Dental Association Foundation
The CDA Foundation was formed as the philanthropic arm of the California Dental Association in 2001 with the mission to improve the oral health of all Californians by supporting the dental health profession in its efforts to meet community needs. The CDA Foundation provides grants and awards to dental students and professionals, promotes oral health prevention and education and holds dental clinics around the state that provide dental care at no charge to Californians in need. www.cdafoundation.org.

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