



## Dr. Joe Castellano

*AAPD President*

### Pursue Your Passion

I have been blessed to be able to practice and care for the children in my community. I am thankful each morning that I can go to work and be passionate about something I love to do. Ironically, that was not always the case.

I have been practicing dentistry for about 29 years. I graduated from dental school in 1990 and immediately following graduation completed an AGD residency. Then it was off to practice. Over the next 10 years I practiced as a general dentist. Things were great, but there seemed to be something missing. I tried my hand at new techniques hoping that it would be the thing that made a difference; some ortho courses, some new cosmetic procedures, and even some endo techniques (yes endo), but nothing seemed to change how I felt. As I reflected on what might be going on, I began to realize that I just didn't like what I did...there was no passion. I also didn't understand how this could be since I had wanted to be a dentist since I was in the 6th grade. I was 10 years out of dental school, had a family, a successful practice, and realized I didn't like what I was doing.

My city was small, and at the time, we had only one pediatric dentist who was always booked. There were times my patients had to wait six to seven months before they could be seen in his office. To help my child patients out, on the weekends I would have a pediatric dentist from out of town come to the office to help me out with the bigger pediatric cases. As he worked with the kids in the office, I was able to watch and learn from him. Over time, I became

comfortable treating children and started seeing more of them on my own. Perhaps the biggest thing I began to realize was that I was having fun at work again. I had found something to look forward to each day – I had found my passion. Treating children made my work rewarding and I decided to specialize in pediatric dentistry. I planned things with my office partner, applied to a pediatric dental program, got accepted, and got it done. Upon completion, I returned to my practice and began practicing as a pediatric dentist, one that was happy and passionate about what he did. This passion also made me feel the need to give back to pediatric dentistry, so I got involved with my state chapter and with the AAPD. I never would have dreamed it would lead me down this incredible path to where I am today.

Passion is powerful, and we each have a passion for something. Sometimes it may take a little longer to find, but none the less it is there – you just need to find it. Whether it be our work, what we advocate for, our hobbies, our families, or anything else, passion gives us that drive, that reason to get up in the morning and do what we love to do. I love my work as a pediatric dentist. I challenge each of you to pursue your passion. Whatever it is that you are passionate about, get involved and go make a difference. You will be better for it, and the difference you make can be immeasurable.

