



## Indian Health Service

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### National Dental Assistants Recognition Week Statement “Something to Smile About”

by

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Last week, March 2-8, 2003, was the 28<sup>th</sup> National Dental Assistants Recognition Week. For the Indian Health Service (IHS) dental assistants and the dental staff they support, it was a typical week of providing more than 52,000 dental services. This is an enormous achievement, resulting in close to 3 million dental services annually, which could not happen without the more than 1,000 dental assistants working within the Agency. Their contributions to clinic- and community-based oral health promotion and disease prevention programs have helped to increase the quality of life for American Indians and Alaska Natives throughout Indian Country.

The achievements that have been made in the oral health of Indian people are in large part due to an outstanding team of well-trained, dedicated, and hardworking IHS dental assistants. The IHS dental assistants have worked side-by-side with dentists, dental hygienists, and community members to raise awareness of how oral health directly impacts on one’s general health.

Dental Assistants Recognition Week was begun in 1976 by the American Dental Association and the American Dental Assistants Association. The week was established to acknowledge the skills and contributions of dental assistants.

I personally understand and appreciate the work of dental assistants in improving the health of American Indian and Alaska Native people. Through their contributions, the IHS has achieved a high level of professional quality oral health care delivery that has earned a reputation for excellence.

Our thanks go out to all the dental assistants throughout the nation, and particularly to those who work daily to improve the dental health of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

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