

Barbara Baker-Ayares, RDH, BS



**Barbara Baker-Ayares, RDH, BS** received her dental hygiene degree from USC, but did not stop there. Along with working in perio for 37 years, she created the “Dental Hygiene Education and Prevention Program. Participating at Health Fairs throughout her career she noticed a staggering percentage of the children screened had rampant decay. Eighteen years ago, she realized that she had to make a difference in the lives of the children. They were underserved, mainly Hispanic and simply lacking in dental health education and services. She began with a partnership with the 31<sup>st</sup> District PTSA, which has had dental clinics in place for fifty years, and is the main resource for quality care of the uninsured children of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Utilizing her bilingual skills, she targets the youngest children entering school, presenting the program in three parts working with children, parents and teachers. Starting with a pilot project of six schools in the most underserved area of the San Fernando Valley the program has grown to access as many as forty schools each year. Over 11,500 children, parents and teachers benefit from her efforts each year. Grants and private contributions have made the program possible.

“Your professional skills will make a profound difference in the health and well-being of underserved children and their families...give back to the community.”

**Education:** Bachelor of Science and Dental Hygiene: University of Southern California.

**Personal/Program Awards and Recognitions:**

- Warner Lambert National Community Outreach Meritorious Award, 1996
- Outstanding Community Involvement in Dental Health, 31<sup>st</sup> District PTSA
- Most Outstanding Community Award in the field of “Health” from California Senator Richard Alarcon
- Outstanding Continuing Service to Children and Youth from the CA State PTSA
- State Assembly member Tony Cardenas Recognition Award 2002
- National Make a Difference Day Recognition Award, 2000

**Primary function in public health position:**

Barbara is the creator and educator of the Dental Hygiene Education and Prevention Program educating children, parents and teachers in dental health and prevention. In addition she is an educator for the Creative Kid’s after school program run by the 31<sup>st</sup> District PTA providing an after school enrichment program for K-5<sup>th</sup> graders.

**What experiences prepared you for your work in public health?** Volunteering for health fairs, the love of dental hygiene and the desire to improve the health and well being of my community became my impetus to become involved in public health.

**What is the most enjoyable aspect of dental public health?**

The ability to make a positive difference in the lives of my community: i.e. comparing the dental health of the children eighteen years ago with the positive results of the DHEPP today, and the knowledge that I have made a difference! Children are now seeing a dentist for preventive care and not simply a response to pain; my parents know how to prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay. Gratitude is expressed daily by the children, their parents and school administration.

**Proudest public health accomplishment:** The creation of the DHEPP! I cherish my title “The Tooth Fairy of the Valley,” given to me by the Los Angeles Times.

**Public Health employer/branch/department and official job title:** 31<sup>st</sup> District PTSA as a Dental Health Educator

**Contact Information:**

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