

Dental Therapists:
Improving Oral Health & Access for
Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexico

- Speaker Bios -

Health & Human Services Committee Hearing

October 12, 2012

PAMELA K. BLACKWELL, JD

Health Action New Mexico – Project Director, Oral Health Access

Originally from New Mexico, Pamela K. Blackwell, JD is the project director for oral health access for Health Action New Mexico, a statewide healthcare advocacy organization. Previously, Blackwell was the Associate Director for Federal Regulatory & Payment Policy for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) in Washington, DC. Blackwell was responsible for the management, strategy, policy development and implementation relating to federal regulatory and payment policy issues. Blackwell has worked directly with state and federal agencies (Medicare, FDA, DEA etc), legislators, and other organizations to develop and improve policy proposals and outcomes for her clients. Blackwell particularly enjoys educating others on the implications of federal and state policy and their very important role in influencing policy decisions. Blackwell was a healthcare legislative assistant on Capitol Hill for Rep. Steve Schiff of New Mexico and Rep. Ralph Regula of Ohio, and served in the legal department of a major hospital system in Washington, DC. Blackwell is a board member of the New Mexico Telehealth Alliance (NMTHA) and the YMCA of Central New Mexico and has been a member of Women in Government Relations (WGR) since 2003. Blackwell earned her bachelors degree in journalism at Colorado State University and her JD at George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia.

RONALD J. ROMERO, DDS MPH

Private Practice Dentist, Former NM Dept. of Health Dental Director

Ronald J. Romero, DDS was born and raised in the Espanola Valley and is a product of the Espanola School System. He attended New Mexico Highlands University where he received a BS degree majoring in Chemistry, the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry receiving a Doctor of Dentistry degree in 1978, the University of New Mexico where he received a Master of Public Health degree, and the University of California at San Francisco where he completed a Dental Public Health Residency Post Graduate program. Dr. Romero has had an exciting dental career in dental public health. He began public service with the State of New Mexico as Chief Dental Officer for the NM Department of Corrections, a position that oversaw expansion of prison dental clinics and staff in Grants, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe in addition to assuring compliance with the dental section mandates of the Consent Decree. Dr. Romero then served as staff dentist at the Las Vegas Medical Center providing dental services for the mentally ill, adolescent and long term care patient populations. He was instrumental in assuring and maintaining compliance for accreditation with Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. (JCAHO). From 2001 to 2005, Dr. Romero served as State Dental Director with the NM Department of Health, managing the Office of Dental Health, responsible for supervising dental sealant and prevention activities, contracts, policy development, and oral health surveillance. Under his watch, the first statewide oral health survey was conducted,

assessing the oral health status of New Mexico's Children. Dr. Romero has served on many advisory committees, currently, the Early Childhood Action Network advisory committee and the Dental State Leadership Head Start Team. He has held national leadership positions with the American Association of Dental Public Health and the American Public Health Association/Oral Health Section and a past member of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, New Mexico Dental Association, and the American Dental Association.

TODD HARTSFIELD DDS

Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health, Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency Program - Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry, Clinical Faculty

Dr. Hartsfield, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, graduated from Loyola Dental School in New Orleans in 1970. He served two years as a U.S. Army dentist, including a tour in South Vietnam. While in Vietnam, he started a dental training program for Buddhist monks at the Buddhist Center in Qui Nhon. Dr. Hartsfield's career has included private practice in rural Louisiana and Canada, public health dentistry and dental education. He spent 20 years in northern Canada training, supervising and working along side dental therapists in isolated northern communities. As the Dental Director for the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona for 5 years, he trained Tribal members to develop and implement oral health promotion, disease prevention programs, such as dental sealants, fluoride varnish and xylitol gum, in addition to providing care in IHS/Tribal clinics. Dr. Hartsfield is currently an Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health (ASDOH), Associate Clinical Director at Dental Care West, a private practice model clinic that is part of ASDOH, and full time faculty in the Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency Program.

DANIEL KENNEDY, DHAT

Dental Therapist - Klawock, Alaska

- Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) in Alaska since 2009
- First U.S. trained dental therapist
- Alaska Native, Tlingit & Athabascan tribes
- Prior professional experience includes: Dental Assistant, AA degree in Environmental Studies
- Practice locations – rural & remote Alaska villages, health clinics, schools, head start programs
- Father of two

MICHAEL E. BIRD MSW, MPH

Member of Pueblo of Kewa/Santo Domingo, Former President of the American Public Health Association (APHA)

- Thirty years of public health experience in the areas of behavioral health, substance abuse prevention, health promotion and disease prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention as well as health administration in New Mexico. He also has been involved on a number of national health disparities projects and programs working with the Centers for Disease Control, American Public Health Association, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as well as other federal, state, tribal and not for profit organizations.

- For over twenty years, Mr. Bird was with the U.S. PHS. Indian Health Service in the Albuquerque Area serving both in the service unit and the Albuquerque Area Office.
- In 2001, Mr. Bird served as the President of the American Public Health Association. He was the first American Indian and social worker to serve in that position with association. The APHA is the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health workers in the world. 50,000 members.
- Mr. Bird earned his Masters of Social Work from the University of Utah and a Masters in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley.
- In 2009 he was recognized as alumnus of the Year by U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health.
- He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Kewa Pueblo Health Board/Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation.

DONALD L. WEIDEMANN

Union County General Hospital – CEO

Don Weidemann is currently the CEO of Union County General Hospital in Clayton, NM. Under his leadership the hospital was awarded the Silver Medal for Quality/Safety from Yellowstone Insurance Exchange in 2011 and received their highest medal in July 2012, and was awarded the Business of the Year award by the Chamber of Commerce. Weidemann co-founded and was elected as the Vice-president of New Mexico Rural Hospital Network. He is president of the Clayton Rotary Club.

Weidemann has over 20 years of experience managing healthcare systems, clinics and hospitals both in the U.S. and in other countries including the following:

- President and owner of Accent Healthcare, Inc., an international consultancy firm with engagements in Guam, the Philippines and Indonesia;
- President at Adventist Health System/Asia in the Philippines where he was responsible for an eleven-hospital health system with over \$50 million in annual revenues and 1000 employees;
- Administrator of Guam SDA Clinic in Tamuning, Guam where he directed all operational, clinical and financial aspects of a large, 3-campus, multi-specialty clinic.
- Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer, Adventist Health System, Jellico Community Hospital, Jellico, TN.
- Services Director, Park Ridge Hospital, Fletcher, NC where he had direct operational management responsibility for Risk Management, Utilization Review, Infection Control, Safety, Dietary, Engineering, Biomed and Environmental Services.

Weidemann received his Master of Health Science and Public Health Finance and Administration from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, a Master of Arts in the Teaching of Biology from

Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA, and his B.S. in Biology and Physical Science from Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA. Weidemann was also a high school math, science and computer teacher.