

Are you ready to lead the peloton?

Last week I had the pleasure of riding in the Make A Wish Foundation's 'Wish-A-Mile' 300-mile bike ride to help grant wishes to kids with life-threatening illnesses. The journey began in Traverse City, Michigan and finished three days later in Marshall, Michigan. Serendipitously, the first rider I met in Traverse City happened to be another Orthodontist from Midland, Michigan. Instantly, I was reminded of how lucky I am to be an orthodontist and to have such great colleagues who do good things.

If you have ever ridden with a group of riders in a peloton, you know that the lead rider pulls the rest of the team. The "puller" allows the other members to travel faster with less effort and provides a better social experience. In our ride, we would take turns leading and pulling the group for a few miles and then go to the back of the pack to draft off of the others. This year, I rode with a group that was faster than my usual pace so I hung in the back of the pack allowing the group to pull me. Essentially, I benefited from the strength and pace of the group. At the break stop, I thanked the group for allowing me to draft off of them. One of the pullers told the group that I hold a special place in his heart because, on a previous ride when he wasn't prepared to lead/pull, I pulled him for many miles. Essentially, I was now being repaid for my previous efforts.

This cycling interaction/experience reminded me a lot of organized orthodontics and the importance of teamwork. We may not always have the tools or the experience (strength) to be the leader (puller) but when we do we need to step up and lead the group. In the same regard, there will be times when we will be along for the ride (drafting off of others) while benefiting from the strength of our organization without contributing directly at that time. It takes all types of people to lead and each of us lead in different fashions. There were times in my journey through the GLAO when I have led the team and other times when I have 'enjoyed the ride'. I am very thankful for both. As I finish my year as President, I am grateful for all roles I have played and will continue to play: leader; middle of the pack rider and; final drafter.

While I was riding in the pack, I may not have been pulling my weight (at that specific moment) but I was reminded that I had done my part previously. I want to thank those who have led the pack before me. They helped me travel faster with less effort and provided a better experience. I also want to congratulate those who will lead the "pack" moving forward. In September I will finish my term as President. It is my time to pull off to the side and drift to the back of the peloton. I am ready to take my turn as "drafter" until my strength returns. Dr. John Monticello will lead the group. In addition, Dr. Michael Sherman has been elected as our new Trustee. Please make every effort to join our peloton. Our current "pullers" are willing and able to help you become a stronger member in our GLAO "peloton" and help prepare you to take the lead.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the GLAO/MASO meeting in Toronto. I promise to use my strength, along with my team, to "pull" us through a fantastic educational and sensational meeting. Come enjoy the ride. The GLAO website is a great resource for the Annual Session information.

Thank you for joining the team,

Josephine Weeden, DDS, MS

GLAO President