

Be A Giver | Or What Jerry and RJ Taught Me

By H. Candace DeLapp, D.D.S., DPLTC Executive Director

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." – Pablo Picasso



Dr. Jerry Branes



Dr. RJ Schultz

Many of you knew Dr. Jerry Branes of Lamar, CO, and Dr. RJ Schultz of Pueblo, CO. Sadly, we lost both of these fine gentlemen in the past few months. Their life lessons remain to inspire us—both were great dentists, but they were so much more. Kindness, humility and generosity are just a few of their attributes.

I wanted to share what many of us learned from Jerry and RJ.

Jerry always described himself as having "one foot in the country and one foot in town" with "an intense love and need for the great out-of-doors." Practicing and serving in a rural setting while concurrently making contributions to dentistry by his participation in the Arkansas Valley Dental Association, CDA and ADA. He served on the CDA Board of Trustees and the CDA Council on Membership from 2015-

2018. He was a valued and admired member of the Trust Board, always saying how privileged he was to serve. For Jerry, dentistry was not just how he made a living, it was "his calling" and he used his "God-given talents to help others."

RJ and the Colorado Mission of Mercy (COMOM) are so closely linked they are almost synonymous. He enthusiastically served this annual dental clinic for 14 years. RJ was a native Puebloan, returning to his hometown to practice after dental school. He gave countless hours from 2004 to 2016 supporting organized dentistry in Colorado via the CDA Board of Trustees and the CDA Council on Finance. RJ was that quiet, contemplative member of the Trust Board.


The practice of dentistry is demanding. Demanding of our time, of our talents, and of our bodies. How on earth could you possibly add volunteering? In studies from Harvard and Yale¹, Mogilner found that even simple volunteering—helping edit an underprivileged child's university application essay—helped people feel that they actually had more time available.

Giving to others helps us view the world from a place of abundance rather than scarcity. There are so many ways to give in dentistry. We all have that individual in our practice whose life we could change if they just had the money. Have you considered doing a case pro bono? Many domestic abuse victims could benefit from your dentistry. The

reward of changing someone's smile and ergo changing their life is greater payment than any amount of money.

There are existing sources – COMOM, Dental Lifeline, Kids in Need of Dentistry, Howard Dental Center, the Atlantis Community, just to name a few. Want to change dentistry in Colorado? Volunteer! Organized dentistry is a voice and a path for change.

Want a break from dentistry? Try giving in other platforms. Help that child with their essay or how about math homework? Give time to your church, time to your kid's sport team, time to your neighbors, or time to your local community. These giving opportunities can lead to quality relationships and happiness. As Mahatma Gandhi shared, "The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Finally, "The Dash Poem" by Linda Ellis speaks of the little dash on your tombstone between birth and death—the beginning and the end. How we spent our time on earth is all contained in that dash. Only those who knew us know what that dash is worth. Humbly, Jerry Branes' and RJ Schultz's dashes say that they were givers. What will your dash be? 

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¹If money does not make you happy, consider time. JL Aaker, M Rudd, C Mogilner. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 21(2011)126-130.