The swirling November winds signal the start of winter in the northland. They foreshadow the inevitable and to some the intolerable weather yet to come. Being a “native” I can’t say I enjoy it all, but I do manage to see the bright on the darkest of days and the warmth on the coldest days. Keeping a routine and applying common sense helps the survival until spring.

As evidenced by my recent travels on behalf of CRDTS the winds are swirling in the arena of licensure testing as well. In October I was invited to represent CRDTS at an ADEA sponsored “Symposium on the Future of Clinical Examination Licensure” in Washington, DC. A Task Force of dental educators had compiled information on models for assessing readiness for practice. The meeting gathered others, including testing agency representatives and hygiene educators to a day of discussion. The assessments reviewed were: Traditional patient-based exam; PGY-1; Portfolio in California; Objective Structured Clinical Exam (NDEB of Canada-OSCE); and the Curriculum Integrated Format (CIF) as piloted in Buffalo, NY.

It was a day of frank conversation regarding these assessments. Practicality, complicated nature, expensiveness, widespread availability, and universal acceptance were all on the table of discussion. It was a chance for many to learn what is currently swirling in this circle. We learned that many options are simply too expensive to administer, not widely available, or too new to evaluate effectively without new technical reports. Ironically the conversation of comparison repeatedly came back to the old standby—the “Traditional Patient-Based Exam”.

The group could not reach consensus on any one pathway, but all present appreciated the collegial and professional discourse.

Testing agencies are feeling the “ice” from all directions. The exams we administer at CRDTS are not carved in stone. Our history as an agency has demonstrated the commitment to constant evaluation and improvement of our product. The day we stand still and fail to consider change that makes sense is the day we place our heads in the sand and disappear. I am confident that CRDTS will never go that route. Prudent, wise, and incremental changes occurring as a result of careful research and application will always be our way. Grab your winter coat- it is cold out there!
The newly remodeled Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel was the site of the 43rd CRDTS Annual Meeting and Workshop held August 20-22, 2015. Approximately 250 attendees enjoyed the hospitality, friendship, and learning opportunities provided during this annual meeting. Representatives from 13 dental schools and 67 dental hygiene programs were in attendance this year, along with state board members, executive directors, dental and dental hygiene examiners, CRDTS committee members, CRDTS staff and special guests.

Initial feedback from the Annual Meeting Evaluation forms indicate that the majority of attendees enjoyed having the President’s Social Hour and Dinner on Friday evening, allowing them time to visit with friends and colleagues while honoring Dr. Barbara Mousel on her successful tenure as President of CRDTS. The ballroom setting was elegant and the food was fabulous!

Ms. Lynn Ray, RDH, BS, conducted the CRDTS Dental and Dental Hygiene Profile session that informed examiners how to interpret their individual profile data, and Dr. Marv Dvorak and Phil Elwood presented the “totally overhauled” proposed CRDTS Bylaws for our review and comments. Thank-you Marv, Phil, and the Bylaws committee for your dedication to complete this comprehensive review/revision of the CRDTS Bylaws.

Saturday morning began with the 1st Timer's Breakfast and Orientation presented by Dr. Jim Harris and Ms. Kimber Cobb, RDH, BS. Most attendees thought the information they received was very useful and appreciated the transparency of the CRDTS organization.

The CRDTS General Session began with the Keynote address provided by Stephen Feldman, JD from North Carolina. He masterfully provided us with a comprehensive history and personal perspective regarding the Supreme Court decision handed down to the North Carolina Dental Board and educated our dental boards of possible future implications because of this decision.
The Annual Business Meeting followed the President’s luncheon, presided by President Barbara Mousel, DDS. Annual reports were given by the CRDTS officers and Executive Director, and the proposed by-laws were approved! Dr. Mary Starziak from Illinois was elected President-elect, Darlene Carritt, RDH, Vice-president, and Jane Lott, RDH, Treasurer. Retiring CRDTS examiners were honored with plaques and thanked for their many years of service to the CRDTS organization. Dr. Tom Lengowski was honored for his many years serving as Chairman of the Examiner Evaluation and Assignment Committee. Dr. Joan Shepard was installed as the new President of CRDTS for the years 2015-2017, and out-going President Dr. Barbara Mousel was honored with gifts and commendations. Thank-you to all who have served and continue to serve CRDTS in these leadership positions.

Ms. Kimber Cobb, RDH BS presented “State of the States” to enlighten us with the current issues and concerns as well as any legislative “happenings” facing our Member States in the CRDTS region. 2015-2016 Exam changes were addressed in the Dental Break-out session by Dr. Steve Holcomb and Ms. Kimber Cobb, and the Hygiene Break-out session was conducted by Ms. Penny Fudally and Ms. Kim Laudenslager. Even though these sessions are at the end of the day, they are very popular and well attended.

The Annual Meeting and Workshop concluded with a CRDTS Reception that not only had great food (the Bananas Foster was “to die for”) but also allowed time to enjoy fellowship with colleagues and friends before departing for home.

A much deserved “Thank-you” goes to our CRDTS Staff who worked tirelessly to arrange a well-planned meeting and also attended to every detail to make this Annual Meeting flow seamlessly. Judging by the comments, the attendees had a great time!
The 2016 Dental examination is off and running in excellent form with all CIF Manikins Examinations being completed in October. Thanks to the efficiency of the spectacular scoring team and staff at the November Mass Grading, an increased number of candidate modules were scored, completed and scores were released within two days of the Kansas City scoring session! A testimony to the great CRDTS team’s dedication, expertise and efficiency.

The Dental Examination Review Committee is working on several exciting projects and will meet in January 2016 to review and continue preparations for the 2017 Exam Season. The Dental Calibration Committee will meet following the ERC meeting to update calibration and standardization materials. Concurrently, the Dental ERC subcommittees continue their assigned tasks in timely fashion.

The Digital Laser Scan Technology Committee (DiLaST Committee), which functions ad hoc under the umbrella of the Dental ERC, has met several times to review software and parameters of assessment. The members have kept their noses to the grindstone as they diligently scan modules, review parameters and compare methods to better evaluate this new frontier. We are looking forward to an update on their progress at the January 2016 meeting.

The Dental Therapy Sub-Committee met in June 2015 to review the scope, content, criteria and protocols of the CRDTS Dental Therapy Examination. We appreciate the input and support of the Minnesota Board of Dentistry in providing detailed survey information for this extensive overhaul of the CRDTS Dental Therapy Examination.

CRDTS continues to explore and consider new and innovative testing and scoring methods as well as alterations to our current examination schedules and protocols. The ERC, at the direction of the Steering Committee, has formed an Alternative Testing Format (ATF) Subcommittee to look into various options to update our current schedule and delivery model for the standard CIF.

The Dental Expanded Function Examination Subcommittee is in the process of developing the content, scoring and criteria components of an examination to assess candidates within those states that allow for expanded functions for dental auxiliaries. The subcommittee is scheduled to meet in January 2016 to review progress and timelines.

As you can see, your CRDTS Dental Examination Review Committee is very active and productive due to the commitments, talents, innovations and “tip of the spear” expertise of the CRDTS family of members. Even with increased workloads, there is never a groan or hesitation... Instead we hear “What can I do to help?” or “We will get it done!” With this type of commitment to testing, our states, public protection and our exceptional professional and central office staff, it is no wonder that we are truly a respected National Dental and Dental Hygiene Examination. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.
The total number of candidates taking our dental hygiene exam and the total number of hygiene testing sites has almost doubled over the past five years. Due to our very dedicated and loyal hygiene examiners, we have been able to staff all exams with only a slight and planned increase to our overall examiner pool. CRDTS dental hygiene has experienced steady growth and progress over the past few years.

Examiners did an outstanding job responding to the September request for 2016 availability information. The nearly 100% response rate PRIOR to the requested deadline was beyond impressive and meant the exam assignment committee (EEAC) could make assignments in a timely and confident manner. Since October 12th, when examiners received notification of their assignments, Central Office reports having had only one examiner cancel from one exam. With well over 400 assignments made and only one cancellation, this is an all-time new record. Thank you again examiners for providing us with such accurate availability information. Well done!

Special thanks go out to Ms. Kimber Cobb, CRDTS Executive Director, and to Emma, Jane, Shanee and Renee who hold down the fort at CRDTS Central Office. Kimber has been instrumental in keeping CRDTS on the forefront of technological advancements and consequently, Central Office staff has been able to manage the huge increase in workload.

Our improved electronics and custom designed software have enabled all of us (candidates, examiners and staff) to benefit from the efficiency and accuracy that comes with such technology. It’s hard to imagine how we would have managed all our growth these past few years without such technology.

Ben Franklin said; “Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning.” Thanks everyone for giving CRDTS meaning.

It has been an interesting four months for me as your new President Elect with changes occurring inside and outside of CRDTS.

I want to thank all of you for attending the Annual Meeting. According to your comments, you enjoyed the updates to the tests and the ability to network with your fellow examiners about the testing arena. I look forward to working with Darlene Carritt to bring another successful meeting to you next August.

As Chair of the Finance Committee, I have been in communication with Treasurer Jane Lott and Past President Tony Malaktaris, regarding our positive financial situation. I want to thank Jane, Tony and Past chair Joan Sheppard for their help and guidance in updating me the last few months about our finances.

I just returned from that ADA meeting in Washington D.C. where initial licensure and testing was part of the discussion at the House of Delegates. It was interesting to hear the members of ASDA bring forth their concepts and that they want the tests to be a psychometrically sound product. I was quite pleased to hear this since CRDTS has just undergone that process. I look forward to working with the ADA and ASDA in the future of our agency.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.