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Women IN BUSINESS

A Publication of the American Business Women's Association

MEMBER DR. SHEILA DOBEE

FINDS HER OWN VOICE TO

**INSPIRE
OTHERS**

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Dr. Sheila Dobee is a national ABWA member and professional model who also is a family and cosmetic dentist in private practice in Fremont, Calif. Last January, she was featured in California's Visage magazine for her extraordinary philanthropic efforts within the dental community. In September, the Bay Area Council of ABWA recognized Sheila as one of three outstanding "Women of the Year."

The Smile Champion

IN THE KNOWLEDGE WORKER AGE

ABWA Leader Gives New Generations Reasons to Grin

By Mia Katz

Almost 60 years ago, the late writer Peter Drucker, "the father of modern management," first coined the term "knowledge worker."

The phrase, used in reference to those who develop and use knowledge in the workplace, gained usage among leaders and business management experts who foresaw a new type of leadership emerging as a result of a related post-Industrial, Knowledge Worker Age. According to business management expert Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The Eighth Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*:

"Leadership in the Knowledge Worker Age will be characterized by those who find their own voice and who inspire others to find theirs. It's leadership where people communicate to others their worth and potential so clearly they'll come to see it in themselves." *

Today, it is not difficult to spot Knowledge Worker Leaders — those individuals who are striving to realize what Covey calls the 8th Habit, or achieving one's own sense of voice and helping others to find theirs. Perhaps best exemplifying such leadership is one member of the American Business Women's Association who has found that the best place to inspire leadership is to start with the very young.

Dr. Sheila Dobee is a national ABWA member and professional model who is also a family and cosmetic dentist in private practice in Fremont, Calif. Last January, she was featured in California's *Visage* magazine for her extraordinary philanthropic efforts within the dental community. The president-elect for the Southern Alameda County Dental Society, Sheila manages the local chapter of the American Dental Association's annual "Give Kids a Smile Project." The project encourages local dentists to deliver a significant amount of free dental care to children from abusive households.

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— Dr. Stephen R. Covey

In 2006, the program provided \$44,000 in free dental care to children in Bay Area domestic violence shelters. Sheila is also working on putting into place a new project entitled "Adopt a Smile." Through the program, a dentist would volunteer to adopt a low-income or abused child into their practice and would provide all necessary dental care at no charge.

"These kids would otherwise not receive any form of dental care," Sheila says. "I have adopted many children in my office as part of this program and treat them at no charge."

"I feel that in any profession, you should be the very best that you can be and then strive to keep improving."

Sheila shares that the reason she was inspired to become involved with such efforts is because she believes children are helpless and without what she calls the "proper voices."

"They cannot go and solicit this help themselves, so I feel it is our responsibility to speak and work on their behalf when possible," she says. "A lot of what happens to you as a child is what shapes you as an adult. The trauma of one's childhood affects every aspect of one's life. It affects a child's confidence, self-worth, perspective, and thus their potential for success."

Some of Sheila's empathy for children who face difficult barriers is related to her own experiences and struggles into adulthood. Born and raised in London, England, Sheila's ancestry can be traced back to her parents' native homeland of Mauritius, an island east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Far from wealthy, Sheila's parents moved to England in the early 1970s because of the limited employment opportunities in Mauritius for her father.

"He moved so he could provide more for his family and so we could have better opportunities in our future," she shares. Sheila adds that her special interest in disadvantaged youth stems from the realization that such children have more challenges to overcome than other children. "Speaking from personal experience, I know how much harder it is to get through in life," she says. "It was very difficult for me to get to dental school due to the fact that I didn't go to private schools like most of the other kids that got into dental school." Sheila, who moved to the United States in 2000 to be

with her United Kingdom-born husband residing in the U.S., also had the struggle of needing to get licensed to practice dentistry in the U.S. — despite the fact she graduated from The Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' Dental Institute in London. "It is one of the most prestigious dental schools in Europe and considered to be one of the best in the world," Sheila explains, adding

that such an affiliation would have ensured her of becoming a practicing dentist anywhere in Europe. However, once she moved to America, Sheila says that additional, difficult exams were required for foreign-trained dentists to practice dentistry — tests that failed the majority of its takers. "I felt like I was starting from ground zero when I came to this country," she says.

After successfully completing the required licensure exams a year or so later, Sheila, who also has a bachelor's degree in Medical Informatics and Management, stepped easily into her role as a

Knowledge Worker by staying current with the latest technology and education. "I feel that in any profession, you should be the very best that you can be and then strive to keep improving," she says. "In dentistry, this involves a combination of hand skills and knowledge. Since we are in the Knowledge Age and things advance so rapidly every year, I think continuing education is critical in order to remain up-to-date and provide the best possible dental care to my patients. Hence, I make it a personal goal to continually learn by reading dental journals and attending seminars and hands-on classes around the country."



"I don't want to miss opportunities that come across my path," she explains. "They sometimes lead to something else."

Sheila is proud to report that not only has she owned her own private practice since age 27, today she is the first foreign-trained female dentist who, in 2008, will hold the position of president of the Southern Alameda County Dental Society. But her aspirations do not end there.

Sheila, who was approached by a modeling agency scout during dental school, recently decided to expand her opportunities in front of the camera. After receiving numerous offers to model in other print and film work by those who have seen her *Visage* magazine cover, Sheila decided to approach "Medium Rare" (www.mediumraretv.org), a television and film review/interview show that focuses on the achievements of women and people of color in television and film, and has interviewed actors such as Forest Whitaker and Jet Li. By late November, Sheila was readily welcomed by the producer of "Medium

Rare" to be one of the show's hosts. Sheila envisions the possibility of someday having her own televised, health-related program. "I don't want to miss opportunities that come across my path," she explains. "They sometimes lead to something else."

In fact, the promise of opportunity is the very reason Sheila is hoping to attend one of ABWA's upcoming conferences this spring, which kick off March 23-24 in Kansas City, Mo. "I just may be there," she says, and laughs. "It just depends on whether or not I have an interview with Steven Spielberg."

**From the article, "Stephen Covey on the New 4-D Workforce," by Dr. Stephen Covey, DNA (Daily News and Analysis), www.dnaindia.com.*

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