A campaign of passion
By Dr. Laureen Langer, Past President, Osseointegration Foundation

The Osseointegration Foundation enjoyed an active year of accomplishment in 2001-2002. Our goal at the beginning of the year was to create an endowment worthy of a membership of 4,500 implant dentistry professionals in over 70 countries. To this end, we established a direct to the membership grass roots “Change a Smile, Change a Life” campaign. We kicked it off during the summer by making personal phone calls to introduce this philanthropic concept to many of our members. We made it “painless” to give by sending a donor fax form for immediate credit card donations.

We were slated to send our new brochure featuring “Kim,” a case treated by the Foundation and Drs. Thomas J. Balshi and Glenn J. Wolfinger, on September 10. (For details on the treatment of this case, see the July/August issue of IJOMI 2002, 17,587-592.) Obviously, the mailing had to be delayed until a more appropriate time in November. In spite of this being the worst year for charities in general, we were able to generate a significant increase in funds over past years. This was due to the kindness and compassion of our membership. It made me proud of our membership. It made me proud to be part of an organization that allows us to accomplish this at a time when peoples’ thoughts and hearts were consumed by our national tragedy.

Our own Dr. Sascha A. Jovanovic, Los Angeles, the Foundation’s Secretary, offered to distribute our “Kim” brochures to the 1,100 members attending the annual Congress of the European Association of Osseointegration in Milan, Italy, as he was simultaneously President of that organization. Unfortunately, they held the Milan meeting the week of September 11. Sascha made an almost impossible marathon trip through most of the world in order to arrive in Milan on the last day of the meeting. We appreciated his efforts, because we think that it is very important for AO members who live in countries outside the U.S. to understand that the Foundation serves them.

One of the most dramatic cases was a patient being treated by Dr. Carlos Aparicio and his team in Spain. The Foundation, through its member contributions, is helping a family of three siblings, two boys and a girl, with severe Amelogenesis Imperfecta. When we said that we could only treat one of the children this year, the two boys immediately asked us if we would accept the girl. We are desperate to help them all. Many people are awaiting our help who genuinely deserve a new chance at life. We need to continue our donations until we reach our goal of 100% member participation. Of course, I would love to see every member give $5,000 right away, but I realize that some of you will want to do this in increments. That is why we created a cumulative donor list that is featured in this newsletter. The donations are by individual, cumulative per member, and are actual contributions received, not pledged contributions.

To honor those who have already given, we made a special lighted Donor Board at the Dallas meeting listing all the names in appropriate categories. Also, we thanked each donor during the Foundation slide presentation at the General Session. Donors can watch their contributions grow by changing levels each year. Hegel has said that “nothing in the world has been accomplished without passion.” All of us are in a healing profession because we have compassion, as the donor list in this newsletter demonstrates. Please show your passion for helping the less fortunate by sending in the attached form today. You can add your name to this prestigious list by simply returning the enclosed donor form or faxing it in.

The mission of the Foundation has always been twofold: encouragement of independent research in osseointegration and helping our members to help others by means of Charitable Grants. This year, we awarded the $10,000 Research Grant to Dr. Kyumin Whang, San Antonio, TX, for his work, “Efficacy of Novel Osteogenic Biomaterial, Oy-Plg.” This paper will be presented at the 2003 Annual Meeting in Boston.

This year, four Charitable Grants were made to the following members: Drs. Carlos Aparicio, Barcelona, Spain, to treat a male with Amelogenesis Imperfecta; Patrick J. Henry, West Perth, Australia, a 31-year-old female suffering from Amelogenesis Imperfecta; R. Gilbert Triplett, Baylor College of Dentistry, Dallas, TX, a 20-year-old male with Amelogenesis Imperfecta (see accompanying article); and Glenn J. Wolfinger, Fort Washington, PA, for a 19-year-old male requiring a fixed restoration supported by osseointegrated implants.

To continue our fundraising and philanthropic efforts during the coming year, we must consistently raise AO member awareness of the work of the Foundation. With the Academy leadership’s continued support, the Foundation will be an asset to the organization and will improve the viability and awareness of AO and the Foundation both within the profession and to the public.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this year as Foundation President. Titles come with responsibility, and I have tried to live up to mine. We have generated strong momentum this year. Now, we have to crank it up a bit and keep it going. All the programs are in place. Therefore, I anticipate that next year will be the best yet.