

# THE FACES OF HDA



**Julie Bencosme, RDH**  
President, NYHDA  
Professional Chapter  
**A proven leader and Advocate  
for underserved communities**  
Fort Lee, New Jersey



Julie is the current New York Professional Chapter President of the Hispanic Dental Association. She was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Her parents immigrated to New York when she was the age of two. Julie is the eldest of two siblings; Rose is her younger sister. They grew up in New York, although Julie currently lives in Fort Lee, New Jersey. She became fascinated with dentistry, working at an after-school job, with a local dentist from her community. She was very assertive ever since she can remember. The Dentist she worked for Dr. K.A. Branch asked her about her career aspirations. He described the dental hygiene profession, and she was “hooked”. Upon graduation, she has served as a Dental Hygienist since 1983 in two city hospitals’ pediatric, periodontal and general practice offices. After graduating as a Dental Hygienist, Julie completed a Bachelors of Science degree in Health Services Administration and a Masters of Arts in Health Education and Promotion, both from the Herbert H. Lehman College at Bronx, New York. She is also a Certified Health Education Specialist. Julie currently serves as a full-time Dental Hygiene faculty in the Dental Hygiene Program at Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College in the Bronx, New York.

She recalls receiving a call from the Program Director of the College she currently teaches in, three weeks after returning from maternity leave, she was employed at Maria de Hostos Community College and has remained teaching there since. She was motivated and excited to teach at this institution, because one of its core missions is to assist minorities to obtain an education; especially Hispanics. Her proudest career achievement is having assisted many students succeed academically and professionally. What continues to inspire her is the success of her Dental Hygiene Students.

Like many other minority colleagues, Julie had to overcome racial and gender bias. Through her tenacity and commitment to succeed, she overcame some of these challenges, and serves as an inspiration for her peers. For example, an article she wrote on the Oral Health of Hispanics was published in 2007 and the information is still relevant. To this date, one of the things that she enjoys the most is educating underserved populations on the importance of oral health, through service and outreach events. This was validated during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Julie and the NYHDA chapter were the first ones to step up and provide oral health kits to first responders, hospital workers, and underserved members of the communities in New York city. We should all remember that New York was the epicenter of this pandemic in the United States, when it all started.

Her words of advice to the younger generations is that *“even though we are undergoing an extremely difficult time, do not stop! Keep going!”*