

## Member Director Spotlight: Dr. Katie Hakes

For Dr. Katie Hakes, dentistry has always been personal. As a child, she faced the extraction of 19 primary teeth due to crowding—an experience that could have been frightening, but her dentist made it reassuring and empowering. That early care shaped her path: “I wanted to provide the same level of care and support to others,” she says. “As a general dentist, I’ve had the privilege of assisting patients and friends throughout their lives, including families spanning five generations.”

### A Career Built on Connection

Dr. Hakes sees dentistry as the ideal blend of medicine, problem-solving, and hands-on skill. What she values most is helping patients who arrive fearful or self-conscious regain confidence. “It’s incredibly fulfilling to see someone light up when they reveal their healthy smile.”

The long-term relationships, watching families grow and return through life’s stages, remain one of the greatest joys of her practice.

### Proud to Serve Washington’s Dental Community

She speaks highly of her colleagues across the state. “We’re known for being at the forefront of dental advancements and providing exceptional care,” she says. “Even when we disagree, dentists in the Northwest are committed to improving care for all patients.”

As a DDWA Member Director, she sees her role as elevating the voice of practicing dentists: “We raise questions, provide education and insights to non-practitioners, advocate for patient-doctor autonomy, and have an equal vote in DDWA’s direction.” She encourages colleagues to [join the Member Advisory Panel \(MAP\)](#), to deepen their understanding of the dental benefits landscape and share perspectives that shape policy.

### Life Beyond Dentistry

Family is central to Dr. Hakes’ life. She treasures time with her three granddaughters and enjoys hiking, biking, gardening, and cooking with her husband, Harold, ideally with a good glass of wine. She also loves to travel, learn from history, and meet people along the way.

Creativity plays a role too. She designs and quilts custom pieces, including her latest project: a K-pop demon hunters quilt for her seven-year-old granddaughter, Genevieve.

## Advice for New Dentists

Her guidance for the next generation is both practical and grounded. “Healthcare is rapidly evolving with new technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI). Concepts and procedures will be challenged. It’s important to question the status quo and make informed decisions.”

She encourages young dentists to listen closely to patients, seek mentors and study clubs, build strong diagnostic and business skills, and approach practice ownership with clear expectations. “Make sure you have a good reality ‘exposure’ and not a perceived ‘romance’ with any profession—especially dentistry. There are many pathways, and it’s up to you to determine what’s best.”

Above all, she urges new dentists to stay rooted in purpose: “Maintain your desire to help others and your commitment to continuous learning as guiding principles.”